

DGuzik 41 Mark

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(Mar 1:1)

The Ministry of John the Baptist

The beginning of the gospel¹ of Jesus Christ,² the Son of God.³

(Guzik)

Mar 1:1-45

Mark 1 - THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

A. Introduction to the Gospel of Mark: What makes this Gospel unique?

1. Rev_4:7 describes the cherubim around God's throne as beings with four faces: the face of a *lion*, of a *calf*, of a *man*, and of an *eagle*. By long tradition, the church has associated one of these "faces" with each one of the Gospels, according to the character and message of the particular Gospel. In the cathedrals of Europe, you will find the motif repeated again and again, of each one of these creatures, typically with a book. By tradition, the creature that represents the Gospel of Mark is the *calf* or the *ox* - a creature of *work* and *service*. The Gospel of Mark shows Jesus as the *Servant* of God, as a *Workman* of God.

a. For this reason, the Gospel of Mark is a "busy" book. In this Gospel, Jesus seems the busiest, moving from one event to another quickly. One of the key words in the Gospel is *immediately*, occurring more than 40 times in Mark. We see Jesus as a *servant* busy meeting needs and busy being God's Messiah.

b. In the Gospel of Mark, the emphasis is on the *deeds* of Jesus more than on the *words* of Jesus. "The Gospel of Mark pictures Christ in action. There is a minimum of discourse and a maximum of deed." (Robertson) 2. Strong church

tradition makes the Apostle Peter the main source of Mark's gospel. Some think of Mark as "The Gospel According to Peter."

a. One indication of Peter's influence is that Peter speaks very affectionately of Mark: *Mark my son* (1Pe_5:13), and he says that Mark was with him.

i. Mark (who is also called John-Mark in passages like Act_12:25) was a "failure" in ministry as pictured in the book of Acts with Paul (Act_15:36-41). His relationship with Paul was restored in the end (2Ti_4:11).

ii. Like Mark, Peter knew what it was like to be a "failure" in following Jesus when he denied Him three times, but he was also restored in the end.

b. Another indication of Peter's influence is the vivid, eyewitness detail of this Gospel. It is "fullest of striking details that apparently came from Peter's discourses which Mark heard, such as green grass, flower beds (Mar_6:38), two thousand hogs (Mar_5:13), looking round about (Mar_3:5; Mar_3:34)." (Robertson)

i. "Mark's Gospel throbs with life and bristles with vivid details. We see with Peter's eyes and catch almost the very look and gesture of Jesus as he moved among men in his work of healing men's bodies and saving men's souls." (Robertson)

c. A third indication of Peter's influence is that "Peter usually spoke in Aramaic and Mark has more Aramaic phrases than the other, like *Boanerges* (Mar_3:17), *Talitha cumi* (Mar_5:41), *Korban* (Mar_7:11), *Ephphatha* (Mar_7:34), *Abba* (Mar_14:36)." (Robertson) 3. Many believe Mark to be the first of the four Gospels written, and that it was written in Rome.

a. Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Mark was the first of the four written, though some believe that Matthew may have been Gospels is the early date of Mark's Gospel. Precisely how early is not definitely known, but there are

leading scholars who hold that A.D. 50 is quite probable.” (Robertson)

b. Mark was not one of the twelve disciples. Perhaps the only mention of him in the gospel is a shadowy one in Mar_14:51-52. As a youth, he may have been part of the larger group that followed Jesus.

c. The early church met at the home of Mark’s mother, Mary, in Jerusalem (Act_12:12).

d. To the hard working and accomplishment oriented Romans, Mark wrote a gospel that emphasizes *Jesus as God’s Servant*. Because no one cares about the pedigree of a servant, the gospel of Mark has no genealogy of Jesus.

i. Another indication that Mark wrote his Gospel for the Roman mind is that he uses more Latin words than any of the other Gospels. “There are also more Latin phrases and idioms like *centurio* (Mar_15:39), *quadrans* (Mar_12:42), *flagellare* (Mar_15:15), *speculator* (Mar_6:27), *census* (Mar_12:14), *sextarius* (Mar_7:4), *praetorium* (Mar_15:6), than in the other Gospels.” (Robertson) ii. When Bible translators go to a people who have never had the Scriptures in their own language, they usually begin by translating the Gospel of Mark. Mark is the most translated book in all the world. One reason is because it is the shortest Gospel; but the other reason is because this Gospel was written for people unfamiliar with first century Judaism. Mark wrote it for the Romans.

B. John the Baptist and preparation for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

1. (Mar_1:1-5) The place and ministry of John the Baptist.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.” “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.’” John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the

land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

a. **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God:** Every great story has a **beginning**, and Mark takes us to his **beginning of the gospel**. The ancient Greek word for **gospel** means “good news,” so this book is *the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. It is the *good news* concerning Jesus.

i. Every word in Mark’s description of Jesus is important. First, this is the *good news* of **Jesus**, a genuine, historical person who walked this earth like other men. It is the *good news* of the **Christ** (which simply means “Messiah”), the promised, anointed Savior of men. And it is the *good news* of **the Son of God**, and a **Son** in more than a sense that we think of all men coming from God. Jesus is the unique **Son of God**, who is also **God the Son**.

ii. Bruce, on this first verse: “This verse may be taken as the superscription of the whole Gospel, and as meaning: Here begins the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God . . . This title takes the place of the opening chapters in these Gospels [Matthew and Luke]. It is all that Mark offers to gratify the curiosity to which these chapters owe their origin. Who is this remarkable Personage of whom you write? He is ‘the Son of God.’”

iii. Lane on the word **gospel**: “Among the Romans it meant ‘joyful tidings’ and was associated with the cult of the emperor, whose birthday, attainment to majority and accession to power were celebrated as festival occasions for the whole world. The reports of such festivals were called ‘evangels’ in the inscriptions and papyri of the Imperial Age. A calendar inscription from about 9 B.C., found in Priene in Asia Minor, says of the emperor Octavian (Augustus): ‘the birthday of the god was for the world *the beginning of joyful tidings* which have been proclaimed on this account.’ This inscription is remarkably similar to Mark’s initial line and it

clarifies the essential content of an evangel in the ancient world: *an historical event which introduces a new situation for the world*. In this perspective the Roman would understand Mark's proclamation of Jesus the Messiah."

b. **As it is written in the Old Testament:** The first thing Mark will say about the ministry of John the Baptist is that it was prophesied in the Old Testament (Mal_3:1 and Isa_40:3). Those passages predict this forerunner who would **prepare the way of the LORD**, this forerunner whom God would call **My messenger**.

i. **My messenger** is important, because this is the first authentically prophetic voice to Israel (with the slight exceptions of Anna and Simeon in Luke 2) for 300 years. Some thought that God stopped sending prophets because He had nothing more to say, but John shows this wasn't the case at all.

ii. If we wondered what Mark meant when he called Jesus the **Son of God**, here he clarifies it. Mark says the ministry of John the Baptist was to **prepare the way of the LORD**, and he prepared the way of *Jesus*. In Mark's mind, Jesus is **LORD**.

c. **Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight:** The passage Mark quotes from (Isa_40:3) has in mind building up a great road for the arrival of a majestic king. The idea is to fill in the holes, and knock down the hills that are in the way.

i. The idea of preparing the way of the LORD is a word picture, because the real preparation must take place in our hearts. Building a road is very much like the preparation God must do in our hearts. They are both expensive, they both must deal with many different problems and environments, and they both take an expert engineer.

ii. Jesus was the coming Messiah and King, and John the Baptist's was the one **crying in the wilderness**, and through his message of repentance, he worked to **prepare the way of the LORD**. We often fail to appreciate how

important the *preparing* work of the LORD is. Any great work of God begins with great *preparation*. John wonderfully fulfilled this important ministry. "John was God's bulldozer to build that highway." (Steadman) d. **John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:** This describes *how* John prepared the way. He **came baptizing**, offering a ceremonial washing that confessed sin and *did something* to demonstrate repentance.

i. **Baptism** simply means to "immerse or overwhelm." John didn't sprinkle when he **came baptizing**. As was the custom in some other Jewish ceremonial washings, John completely immersed those he baptized. "Naturally, therefore, the baptism was not a mere sprinkling with water, but a bath in which his whole body was bathed."

(Barclay)

ii. Baptism was practiced in the Jewish community already in the form of ceremonial immersions; but typically, it was only among Gentiles who wished to become Jews. For a Jew in John's day to submit to baptism was essentially to say, "I confess that I am as far away from God as a Gentile and I need to get right with Him." This was a real work of the Holy Spirit.

iii. John's baptism might have been related to the Jewish practice of baptizing Gentile converts, or to some of the ceremonial washings practiced by the Jews of that day. Though it may have some links, at the same time it was *unique* - so unique that John simply became known as "the Baptizer." If there were a lot of people doing that, it wouldn't be a unique title.

iv. Is Christian baptism - the baptism we do today - just like John's? Christian baptism is like John's in the sense that it demonstrates repentance, but it is also more. It is being *baptized into Christ*, that is, into His death and resurrection (Rom_6:3).

e. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem: John's ministry met with wonderful response. There were many people who recognized their sinfulness, their need to get ready for the Messiah, and were willing to *do* something about it.

i. John's main message wasn't "You're a sinner, you need to repent." John's main message was "*The Messiah is coming.*" The call to repentance was the *response* to the news that the Messiah was coming.

2. (Mar_1:6-8) John the Baptist: the man and his message. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.

I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

a. Clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt: In his personality and ministry, John the Baptist was patterned after the bold Elijah (2Ki_1:8), who fearlessly called Israel to repentance.

i. In the spirit of today's age, John's ministry would have been very different. He wouldn't start in the wilderness. He wouldn't dress funny. He wouldn't preach such a straightforward message. He would use marketing surveys and focus groups to hone his message and presentation. John wasn't motivated by the spirit of today's age, but by the Spirit of God.

b. There comes One after me who is mightier than I: The message of John the Baptist was simple. John preached Jesus, not himself. John pointed to Jesus, not to himself.

c. Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose: This might sound like spiritual exaggeration on John's part - a "I'm not worthy to lick his boots" kind of thing. But John says this because in his day, the rabbis taught that a teacher might require just about anything of

his followers, *except* to make them take off his sandals. That was going too far! But John says that he is not even worthy to do this for Jesus.

i. Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 96a: “All services which a slave does for his master a pupil should do for his teacher, with the exception of undoing his shoes.” (Cited in Lane)

d. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit:** John recognized his baptism was only a *prelude* to what Jesus would bring. The Messiah would bring an immersion in the Holy Spirit that was greater than the immersion in water as a demonstration of repentance.

i. John’s baptism could demonstrate repentance, but it could not truly cleanse one from sin, nor could it impart the Holy Spirit in the way Jesus could after His work on the cross was completed for us.

3. (Mar_1:9-11) The baptism of Jesus.

It came to pass in those days *that* Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

a. **Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan:** Why was Jesus baptized? It was not because He needed cleansing from sin, because Jesus was sinless, as John himself understood (Mat_3:14).

Instead, Jesus was baptized in keeping with His entire mission on earth: to identify with sinful man.

i. Jesus didn’t *have* to be baptized. He also didn’t *have* to die on a cross in our place. He did both things to express His solidarity with fallen man.

b. **Immediately:** The ancient Greek word is *euthus*, and this is the first of more than 40 times this word is used in the Gospel of Mark.

c. **You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:** When this voice of God the Father spoke from

heaven, everyone knew that Jesus was not just another man being baptized. They knew Jesus was the perfect (**in whom I am well pleased**) Son of God, identifying with sinful man. By this, everyone knew that Jesus was different. Jesus was baptized to be identified *with* sinful man, but He was also baptized to be identified *to* sinful man.

i. What a strange scene! You have the humble beginnings:

- **Jesus:** A common, unremarkable name.
- **From Nazareth:** An unremarkable, despised village.
- **Of Galilee:** The “unspiritual” region, not the “Bible belt” of the area at that time.

- **Was baptized:** Identifying with sinful man.

- **In the Jordan:** An unremarkable - often even unpleasant - river. “Early rabbinic tradition explicitly disqualifies the River Jordan for purification, [according to] The Mishnah, *Parah* VIII. 10.” (Lane) ii. Then you have the great glory:

- **The heavens parting:** Heaven opened wide for this. The ancient Greek for this phrase is strong. It has the idea that sky was torn in two, “being rent asunder, a sudden event.” (Bruce)

- **The Spirit descending:** The Spirit of God was present, and in some way His presence was discernable.

- **Like a dove:** Luk_3:22 puts it like this: *And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him.*

In some way the Spirit was present, and “flew down” on Jesus **like a dove**.

- **A voice came from heaven:** It’s rare in the Bible when we read that God speaks audibly from heaven, but this is one of those glorious occasions.

- **You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased:** What could be more glorious than to have God the Father praise and affirm you publicly?

iii. God loves to display His glory in the midst of humble surroundings.

d. **And the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove:** This wasn’t just a fluttering cloud hovering above Jesus, but

it had the actual appearance of **a dove**. Luk_3:22 says, *the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him*. It doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit *was* a dove, but appeared **like a dove**. We also know that John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus (Joh_1:32).

i. Why is the Holy Spirit associated with a **dove**? First, because of Gen_1:2, where the brooding of the Spirit over the waters at creation suggested to some ancient rabbis the action of a dove. Also, doves are gentle, non-threatening birds, they do not resist, they do not fight back. It represents the gentle, faithful work of the Holy Spirit.

e. This is one of the familiar passages of the New Testament that show us the entire Trinity in action. God the Son is baptized, God the Father speaks from heaven, and God the Holy Spirit descends like a dove.

f. So far in the Gospel of Mark we see four witnesses, each testifying to the identity of Jesus. What more evidence do we need?

- Mark said Jesus is the *Son of God* (Mar_1:1).
- The prophets said Jesus is *LORD* (Mar_1:2-3).
- John the Baptist said Jesus was the *One after me who is mightier than I* (Mar_1:7-8).
- God the Father said Jesus is the *Beloved Son* of God (Mar_1:10-11).

4. (Mar_1:12-13) Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, among the wild beasts.

Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

a. **Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness**: The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in a dramatic way at His baptism. The *work* of the Spirit in Jesus was to *lead* Him - rather, to *drive* Him, and **the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness**. It wasn't an *easy* thing, or a

comfortable thing for Jesus to be in **the wilderness**, but it was a *good* thing, because the Spirit only does good things.

i. “Mark has used a strange word. ‘The Spirit driveth Him forth’; quite literally, ‘the Spirit casteth Him forth.’ It is the very work afterward employed of the casting out of demons by Christ.” (Morgan)

b. **And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan:** Jesus was identified with sinners in His baptism. Here, He is also identified with sinners in their *temptations*. Heb_4:15 reminds us, *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

i. **Forty** - as in the **forty days** of Jesus in the wilderness - is a number that often shows a time of *testing* or *judgment*. In Noah’s flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Israel was in the wilderness 40 years. Moses kept sheep in the wilderness for 40 years. This is Jesus’ time of *testing*.

c. **Forty days, tempted by Satan:** Matthew and Luke detail three specific temptations Jesus suffered in these days, and how Jesus resisted Satan each time by standing on the Word of God. Mark tells us that Jesus faced more than the three dramatic temptations described by Matthew and Luke. This entire period was a time of testing.

d. **Was with the wild beasts:** Matthew and Luke make no mention of this, but it is significant. In the ancient Greek grammar, the emphasis is on **with**. In other words, Jesus was at peace **with the wild beasts**. This shows two things: • Jesus is the Second Adam, and like unfallen Adam, He enjoys a peaceful relationship with all the animals.

• Jesus remains the unfallen, sinless one despite all the temptation, with authority over **the wild beasts**.

i. “These fell creatures saw in Christ the perfect image of God; and therefore revered him as their Lord, as they did Adam before his fall.” (Trapp)

e. **And the angels ministered to Him:** The sense in Mark is that the **angels ministered to Him** at *the end* of this

time of intense temptation. This shows Jesus' authority, not only over **the wild beasts**, but also over **the angels**. They are His servants.

i. "Morally victorious, He was Master of the creation beneath Him, and the angels ran upon His errands, for such is the real suggestiveness of the word. Thus He is seen as God's Man, perfect in spite of the temptation!" (Morgan) C. Four disciples are called.

1. (Mar_1:14 a) The Galilean ministry of Jesus begins.

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee,

a. **After John was put in prison:** There is a detailed description of this, and John's fate in prison, in Mar_6:17-28.

b. **Jesus came to Galilee:** Jesus spent most of His time in the region of **Galilee**, usually only going up to Jerusalem for the appointed feasts. Galilee was a large, populated area north of Judea and Jerusalem, where Jews and Gentiles lived together, though usually in their own distinct cities.

c. Galilee was not a small, backwater region. According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, Galilee was an area of about 60 by 30 miles and had 204 villages, with none less than 15,000 people. This means there were more than 3 million people in the extended region.

2. (Mar_1:14-15) What Jesus did in His ministry.

Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

a. **Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God:** Jesus was a *preacher*, and He brought the message of God's rule on earth, though not in the manner that was popularly expected or desired. Most people wanted a **kingdom**, but a political kingdom that would replace the oppressive occupation of the Romans.

i. Contrary to the expectations of most people in His day, Jesus brought a kingdom of love, not subjugation; of grace, not law; of humility, not pride; for all men, not only the Jews; to be received voluntarily by man, not imposed by force.

ii. The Gospel of Mark - and the rest of this chapter - will stress the *work* of Jesus, and His wonderful miracles. But with this opening statement, Mark reminds us that the focus of Jesus' ministry was **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**. Jesus was a preacher who did wonderful miracles, not a miracle worker who sometimes preached.

b. **Saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"** : When Jesus preached the **gospel of the kingdom of God**, He wanted people to know that it was *near* - as close as your **hand**. It wasn't as distant or as dreamy as they had imagined. Now was the time for them to encounter **the kingdom of God**.

i. **The time is fulfilled**: There are two ancient Greek words that can be translated *time*. One is *chronos*, meaning simple chronological time. The other is *kairos*, which means "the strategic opportunity, the decisive time." Jesus used this second word when He said, "**the time is fulfilled**." His idea was, "The strategic time for the kingdom of God is now. Now is your time of opportunity. Don't let it pass you by."

c. **Saying . . . "Repent"** : When Jesus preached the **gospel of the kingdom of God**, He wanted people to know what entering that kingdom was like. They could not enter the kingdom going the same way they had been going. They had to *change their direction* to experience **the kingdom of God**.

i. Some people think that repentance is mostly about *feelings*, especially feeling sorry for your sin. It is wonderful to feel sorry about your sin, but **repent** isn't a "feelings" word. It is an *action* word. Jesus told us to make a change of the mind, not merely to feel sorry for what we have done. Repentance speaks of a change of direction, not a sorrow in the heart.

ii. Is repentance something we must *do* before we can come to God? Yes and no; repentance does not describe something we must do before we come to God, it describes what coming to God is like. If you are in New York, and I tell

you to come to Los Angeles, I don't really need to say "Leave New York and come to Los Angeles." To come to Los Angeles *is* to leave New York, and if I haven't left New York, I certainly haven't come to Los Angeles. We can't come to the **kingdom of God** unless we leave our sin and the self-life.

d. **Saying . . . "Believe"** : When Jesus preached the **gospel of the kingdom of God**, He wanted people to know what it was like to live in the kingdom. The kingdom Jesus preached was not just about a moral renewal. It was about trusting God, taking Him at His word, and living a relationship of dependence on Him.

i. The ancient Greek word Jesus used for **believe** (*pisteuo*) means much more than knowledge or agreement in the mind. It speaks of a relationship of trust and dependence.

ii. "There are many people who believe the Gospel, but they do not believe *in* it. It was an appeal not only to accept it as an intellectually accurate statement; but to rest in it, to repose in it. It was a call to let the heart find ease in it."

(Morgan)

3. (Mar_1:16-20) Four disciples are called.

And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

a. **He saw Simon and Andrew**: This was not the first time Jesus had met this group of men. Joh_1:35 to Joh_4:54 describes their previous meeting.

b. **For they were fishermen**: What kind of men were they? They were common men, without theological

credentials or status in the world. Jesus met them as they labored like any common man. These disciples were chosen by Jesus not for who they were, but for what Jesus could do *through* them.

i. “Surely the good qualities of successful fishermen would make for success in the difficult ministry of winning lost souls: courage, the ability to work together, patience, energy, stamina, faith, and tenacity. Professional fishermen simply could not afford to be quitters or complainers!” (Wiersbe)

ii. Many great men look down on the “common” people, but Jesus never did. He was not like British playwright George Bernard Shaw, who said: “I have never had any feeling for the working classes, except a desire to abolish them, and replace them with sensible people.”

c. **Follow Me:** With this invitation, Jesus shows what Christianity is all about: following *Jesus*. At its root, Christianity is not about theological systems, rules, or even helping people - it is about following Jesus.

i. “Nevertheless it is true, by New Testament times, the phrase ‘to follow’ had added to itself an ethical aspect, for it is always the superior who walks ahead, and the inferior who follows: therefore, at the least, a rabbi-disciple relationship was implied.” (Cole)

d. **I will make you become fishers of men:** Jesus said He would **make** them fishers of men. If these men received something wonderful in following Jesus, it was only right - only good manners - for them to give it to others, and to “catch”

men into the same kingdom of God. Jesus said, “**I will make you become fishers of men.**”

i. When Jesus called them to be fishers of men, He called them to do what He did. Was there ever a greater fisher of men than Jesus? But He wanted others to do the work He did. First these four, then twelve, then hundreds, then

thousands and thousands upon thousands through the centuries.

ii. **I will make you become:** “Implying a gradual process of training.” (Bruce)

e. **Mending their nets:** “Mark’s term means properly to put in order, or to make ready, and so includes cleansing, mending and folding the nets in preparation for the next evening’s fishing.” (Lane) Significantly, a derivative of this same word is used in Eph_4:12 where Paul describes the work of *equipping the saints*. As Strong’s definition relates, to *equip* therefore means to complete thoroughly, to repair or adjust, to fit, frame, mend, to make perfect, to perfectly join together, to prepare, or restore.

D. A busy day in Galilee.

1. (Mar_1:21-22) Jesus teaches in the synagogue.

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

a. **They went into Capernaum:** You can go to **Capernaum** today and see the remains of an ancient Jewish synagogue, which still has the foundation of this same building Jesus **taught** in.

b. **Immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught:** Typically, the *synagogue* had no set teachers; the custom of “the freedom of the synagogue,” where learned guests were invited to speak on the Scripture reading for that day gave Jesus the opportunity to preach.

c. **They were astonished at his teaching:** We are not told what Jesus taught, but we are told of the effect the teaching had on His audience. **They were astonished.** They had never heard anyone teach quite like this before.

d. **For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes:** The **scribes** of Jesus’ day rarely taught boldly. They would often simply quote a variety of Rabbis as interpreters. Jesus taught with boldness.

i. Jesus taught with **authority** because He *really had authority*. He brought a divine message, and was confident that it was from God. He wasn't quoting from man, but from God.

ii. Jesus taught with **authority** because He *knew what He was talking about*. You can't teach with **authority** if you aren't familiar with your material.

iii. Jesus taught with **authority** because He *believed what He taught*. When you really believe what you teach, it comes through to your audience with **authority**.

e. We see first the *submitted* Jesus - submitted to His Father in baptism, submitted to the Holy Spirit in going out to the wilderness. Now we will see the *authority* of Jesus. Authority flows from submission. We aren't safe with real *authority* from God unless we are also submitted to God.

- Authority when He was with the wild beasts.
- Authority when the angels served Him.
- Authority announcing the presence of the kingdom of God and commanding men to repent and believe.
- Authority calling disciples after Himself.
- Many more striking displays of authority will now follow.

2. (Mar_1:23-24) An outburst from an unclean spirit.

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are; the Holy One of God!"

a. **A man . . . with an unclean spirit**: In describing the man who is demon possessed, Mark uses the same grammar Paul used to describe the Christian's being "in Christ" (1Co_1:30). This **unclean spirit** was the evil "lord" of this poor man's life.

i. The similarity in the wording between the Christian having Jesus and this man having a demon demonstrates that He is in us, we are in Him. We are "Jesus possessed" in the right sense, because His filling and influence is only for good.

ii. Even as Jesus can live in us, so one uninhabited by Jesus can be inhabited by a demon if the invitation is extended, either consciously or unconsciously. Exposure to things such as spiritism, astrology, occult practices and drugs are dangerous. They open doors to the demonic which are better left closed.

iii. It was an **unclean spirit**: “The ruling spirit in the man was not only a devil, but an unclean devil. Satan sometimes cleans himself up, and comes out quite bright and shining, like an angel of light; but do not mistake him; he is still a devil, for all his pretended purity. There are glittering sins, and respectable sins, and these will ruin souls, but this poor man had a disreputable demon in him, a spirit of the foulest, coarsest, and most abominable order.” (Spurgeon)

b. **I know who You are; the Holy One of God!** The demon himself testifies that Jesus is holy and pure. The demons admit that their wilderness temptations failed to corrupt Jesus.

3. (Mar_1:25-28) Jesus rebukes the spirit and gains great acclaim.

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

a. **Jesus rebuked him**: Jesus didn’t need to rely on hocus-pocus or ceremonies. He simply demonstrated the authority of God.

b. **Be quiet**: Jesus often told demons to shut up. Today, many self-styled deliverers from demon possession encourage the demons to speak, or even *believe* what the demons say. Jesus avoided such theatrics and merely delivered the afflicted man.

c. There were other exorcists in Jesus' day. He was not the only one who tried to cast out demons. But there was a huge difference between Jesus and other exorcists. They used long, fancy, elaborate, superstitious ceremonies. They often failed.

Jesus never failed to cast out a demon, and He never used an elaborate ceremony. Here was Jesus' ceremony: **"Be quiet, and come out of him!"**

i. Lane describes an ancient account from Josephus about the work of an ancient exorcist named Eleazar, around the time of Jesus: "He put to the nose of the possessed man a ring which had under its seal one of the roots prescribed by Solomon, and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon through his nostrils, and, when the man at once fell down, adjured the demon never to come back into him, speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he had composed. Then, wishing to convince the bystanders and prove to them that he had this power, Eleazar placed a cup or foot-basin full of water a little way off and commanded the demon, as it went out of the man, to overturn it and make known to the spectators that he had left the man."

ii. "The people were accustomed to the use of magical formulae by the Jewish exorcists (Mat_12:27; Act_19:13), but here was something utterly different." (Robertson)

4. (Mar_1:29-31) Peter's mother-in-law is healed.

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

a. **They entered the house of Simon and Andrew:** Jesus came into this humble house in Capernaum, and met a sick woman there. Jesus didn't only "perform for the crowds." Here, He ministers to one person in a private home. Jesus'

interest was in meeting the needs of individuals not in promoting Himself, and He didn't need to power of crowd dynamics to help His ministry.

b. **So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her:** In this healing of Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus shows both *simplicity* and *power*. Jesus healed with the same authority that He cast out demons.

i. "Peter's mother-in-law was suffering from what the Talmud called 'a burning fever.' It was, and still is, very prevalent in that particular part of Galilee. The Talmud actually lays down the methods of dealing with it. A knife made wholly of iron was tied by a braid of hair to a thorn bush. On successive days there was repeated, first, *Exo_3:2-3*; second *Exo_3:4*; and finally *Exo_3:5*. Then a certain magical formula was pronounced, and thus the cure was supposed to be achieved. Jesus completely disregarded all the paraphernalia of popular magic, and with a gesture and a word of unique authority and power, he healed the woman." (Barclay)

c. **And she served them:** Peter's mother-in-law responds the way we should when Jesus blesses us. She immediately served Jesus out of gratitude.

5. (Mar_1:32-34) Healing among a multitude.

At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

a. **When the sun had set:** Jesus is ministering after sundown, ending the Sabbath day (Mar_1:21). Freed from the Sabbath restrictions on travel and activity, the people come to Him freely to be healed.

b. **Then He healed many:** It had been a busy day, and now Jesus ministers after nightfall to **the whole city** that

had **gathered together at the door**. Jesus worked very hard to serve the needs of others, and always put their needs before His.

E. Preaching and healing in Galilee.

1. (Mar_1:35) Jesus' prays in a solitary place.

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

a. **Now in the morning:** After such a long day as the day before, would we not excuse Jesus for "sleeping in"? Yet He, **having risen a long while before daylight**, made less time for sleep and more time for prayer.

i. "Look no man in the face till thou hast seen the face of God. Speak thou with none till thou hast had speech with the Most High." (Spurgeon)

b. **He prayed:** Jesus did not need to pray because He was weak, but because He was strong, and the source of His strength was His relationship with God His Father. Jesus knew that pressure and busyness should drive us *towards* prayer, not *from* prayer.

i. What did Jesus pray for? As much as anything, Jesus used this time of prayer for that close, intimate communion with God the Father that He longed for, which nourished and strengthened His soul. We can also surmise that Jesus prayed for Himself. He prayed for His disciples. He prayed for those He met and ministered to the previous night. He prayed for those He would meet and minister to that coming day.

c. **A solitary place:** Jesus knew the importance of **solitary** time with God. While it is good and important for us to join with others in the presence of God, there is much in our Christian life that can only be learned and experienced in **a solitary place** with God.

i. This is more than "I pray all the time" kind of prayer. It is a wonderful thing to commune with God all through the day, and to constantly shoot up prayers to heaven. But don't you

think Jesus did that also? Yet He still thought it was vital to take time out for prayer in a solitary place.

ii. “Woe unto that man whose devotion is observed by everybody, and who never offers a secret supplication. Secret prayer is the secret of prayer, the soul of prayer, the seal of prayer, the strength of prayer. If you do not pray alone, you do not pray at all. I care not whether you pray in the street, or in the church, or in the barrack-room, or in the cathedral; but your heart must speak with God in secret, or you have not prayed.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “There is in public and private prayer a more united strength and interest, but in secret prayer an advantage for more free and full communication of our souls unto God. Christ for this chooseth the morning, as the time freest from distractions and company; and a solitary place, as fittest for a secret duty.” (Poole)

d. This passage shows us many things about the prayer life of Jesus.

- For Jesus, fellowship with God was something for more than just the Sabbath.
- Jesus wanted to be alone to pray.
- Jesus wanted to be alone so He could pour out His heart to His Father.

2. (Mar_1:36-39) The tour through the Galilee region.

And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

a. **Searched for Him:** This is early in Jesus’ relationship with His disciples. As they got to know Him, they learned that whenever they could not find Him, He was probably off in solitary prayer.

b. **Everyone is looking for You:** The disciples probably thought Jesus would be pleased at His popularity, and would

want to spend more time with the crowd He had just gathered and impressed the day before.

c. **Let us go into the next towns:** Jesus did not stay in that town and “ride” the crest of His popularity there. He knew His ministry was to **preach** all across Galilee, His ministry was not being famous or enjoying the fame.

i. The clear emphasis on Jesus’ ministry is preaching: **for this purpose I have come forth**. Though the healing and miraculous ministry of Jesus was impressive and a glorious blessing, it was never His emphasis.

ii. “We do not say that preaching is a greater work than prayer, or that it is not a ministers’ duty to pray; nor yet that it is greater than administering the sacrament: but this we say, we read of Christ’s preaching often in the synagogues, on the mountain, in a ship; of his public praying we read not, though of his private and secret prayer often. We read expressly that he baptized none.” (Poole)

3. (Mar_1:40) A leper comes to Jesus.

Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”

a. **A leper came to Him:** Leprosy was one of the horrific diseases of the ancient world. Today, leprosy afflicts 15 million across the world, mostly in third world nations.

i. It begins as small, red spots on the skin. Before too long the spots get bigger, and start to turn white, with sort of a shiny, or scaly appearance. Pretty soon the spots spread over your whole body and your hair begins to fall out -

first from your head, then even from your eyebrows. As things get worse, your finger nails and toenails get sort of loose; they start to rot and eventually fall off. Then the joints of your fingers and toes begin to rot, and they start to fall off, piece by piece. Your gums start shrinking, and they can’t hold your teeth anymore, so you lose each of them.

It keeps eating away at your face until literally your nose, your palate, and even your eyes rot - and you waste away

until you die.

ii. As horrible as the physical suffering was, the worst part of having leprosy might have been the way people treated you. In the Old Testament, God said that when there were lepers among the people of Israel, they should be carefully quarantined and examined (Leviticus 13-14). Lepers had to dress like people who were in mourning for the dead, because they were considered to be the living dead. They had to warn the people around them by crying out, "Unclean! Unclean!" whenever people were near them. This really wasn't because leprosy is highly contagious; it isn't. It is because God used this disease as a striking example of sin and its effects on us.

iii. But the people of Jesus day went further than the Old Testament told them to. Back then, they thought two things about a leper: *you are the walking dead* and *you deserve this because this is the punishment of God against you*. Jewish custom said that you should not even greet a leper. Custom said you had to stay six feet from a leper.

One Rabbi bragged that he would not even buy an egg on a street where he saw a leper, and another boasted that he threw rocks at lepers to keep them far from him. Rabbis didn't even allow a leper to wash his face.

b. **Imploring Him, kneeling down to Him:** Knowing how terrible the disease was, it does not surprise us that the leper was so desperate before Jesus.

c. **You can make me clean:** The leper really believed in the power of Jesus, and had confidence that Jesus *could* heal him.

i. The leper had no doubt about Jesus' power. This shows great faith and great awareness because as far as we know, Jesus hadn't healed a leper yet in His ministry.

ii. In that day, everyone knew only God could heal a leper. There was no cure, and no one "just got better." A leper would never get better without a direct healing from God.

d. **You can make me clean:** The leper knew what he needed from Jesus. He didn't ask to be healed, but *cleansed*; the man needed much more than healing.

i. Whatever you *think* you need from God, what you most need from Jesus is cleansing - to be cleansed from sin and the life lived for one's self.

4. (Mar_1:41-45) Jesus cleanses the leper.

Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

a. **Jesus, moved with compassion:** We are often moved with compassion when we meet sick people, but lepers usually did not arouse compassion. Their whole appearance was too repulsive, and they usually made people feel *disgust* instead of compassion.

i. Luke says this man was *full of leprosy* (Luk_5:12), meaning that the disease was in the advanced stages. This man's whole body and life was rotting, and Jesus changed him.

b. **Put out His hand and touched him:** Jesus healed many people many different ways, but here He chose to heal this man with a touch. He could have spoken a word or even just thought a thought and the man would have been healed, but Jesus used a touch.

i. Why was a touch so important? Because people were forbidden to touch this man on account of his leprosy. Since his disease was in the advanced stages, he had been a leper

a long time, it was a long time since he had felt a loving touch.

ii. “In the antiseptic cleanliness of modern hospitals we lose sight of the wonder of the pure Christ stooping to touch the *odiosus peccator*, the ‘stinking sinner’, to use the strong term beloved by our forefathers.” (Cole) iii. It was against Jewish ceremonial law to touch a leper. Yet Jesus did not break that law, because as soon as He touched the man, he was no longer a leper!

c. **Show yourself to the priest:** Jesus told the former leper go to the priests to carry out the ceremony the law required when a leper was cleansed. Jesus did this first to honor the law of God, but also **as a testimony** to the priests that an incurable disease had been cured.

i. The elements used in the Levitical ceremony for the cleansing of a leper (cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet) are the same elements used in cleansing someone who has been defiled by a dead body (Num_19:6; Num_19:13; Num_19:18 and Lev_14:4-7).

ii. This also shows why David said *purge me with hyssop* in his great Psalm of repentance (Psalms 51); he saw himself as a spiritual leper, needing cleansing.

iii. Since lepers were never healed, these priests had never conducted this ceremony. When they had to look up in Leviticus the procedure for this ceremony, and had to carry it out for the first time, it would be a strong witness that the Messiah was among them.

d. **Say nothing to anyone . . . But he went out and began to proclaim it freely:** The former leper shows a “well-intentioned disobedience” to Jesus. “Yes, I know Jesus told me not to tell anyone, but what could be wrong with doing it?”

i. The man may have meant well, and might have thought he was helping Jesus, but his disobedience hindered the ministry of Jesus: **Jesus could no longer openly enter**

the city. It's best to always just obey Jesus, and we should never think that we have a better plan than He does.

(Mar 1:2) As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,⁴

**" Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way,**

(Mar 1:3) **the voice of one shouting in the wilderness,**

**' Prepare the way⁵ for the Lord,
make⁶ his paths straight. ' "⁷**

(Mar 1:4) In the wilderness⁸ John the baptizer⁹ began preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁰

(Mar 1:5) People¹¹ from the whole Judean countryside and all of Jerusalem¹² were going out to him, and he was baptizing them¹³ in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

(Mar 1:6) John wore a garment made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.¹⁴

(Mar 1:7) He proclaimed,¹⁵ "One more powerful than I am is coming after me; I am not worthy¹⁶ to bend down and untie the strap¹⁷ of his sandals.

(Mar 1:8) I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

(Mar 1:9) ***The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus***

Now¹⁸ in those days Jesus came from Nazareth¹⁹ in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan River.²⁰

(Mar 1:10) And just as Jesus²¹ was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens²² splitting apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.²³

(Mar 1:11) And a voice came from heaven: "You are my one dear Son;²⁴ in you I take great delight."²⁵

(Mar 1:12) The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness.

(Mar 1:13) He was in the wilderness forty days,²⁶ enduring temptations from Satan. He²⁷ was with wild animals, and angels were ministering to his needs.²⁸

(Mar 1:14) ***Preaching in Galilee and the Call of the Disciples***

Now after John was imprisoned,²⁹ Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel³⁰ of God.³¹

(Mar 1:15) He³² said, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God³³ is near. Repent and believe the gospel!"

(Mar 1:16) As he went along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen).³⁴

(Mar 1:17) Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people."³⁵

(Mar 1:18) They left their nets immediately and followed him.³⁶

(Mar 1:19) Going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother in their³⁷ boat mending nets.

(Mar 1:20) Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

(Mar 1:21) ***Jesus' Authority***

Then³⁸ they went to Capernaum.³⁹ When the Sabbath came,⁴⁰ Jesus⁴¹ went into the synagogue⁴² and began to teach.

(Mar 1:22) The people there⁴³ were amazed by his teaching, because he taught them like one who had authority,⁴⁴ not like the experts in the law.⁴⁵

(Mar 1:23) Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit,⁴⁶ and he cried out,⁴⁷

(Mar 1:24) "Leave us alone,⁴⁸ Jesus the Nazarene! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One⁴⁹

of God!"

(Mar 1:25) But⁵⁰ Jesus rebuked him:⁵¹ "Silence! Come out of him!"⁵²

(Mar 1:26) After throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

(Mar 1:27) They were all amazed so that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him."

(Mar 1:28) So⁵³ the news about him spread quickly throughout all the region around Galilee.

(Mar 1:29) ***Healings at Simon's House***

Now⁵⁴ as soon as they left the synagogue,⁵⁵ they entered Simon and Andrew's house, with James and John.

(Mar 1:30) Simon's mother-in-law was lying down, sick with a fever, so⁵⁶ they spoke to Jesus⁵⁷ at once about her.

(Mar 1:31) He came and raised her up by gently taking her hand. Then the fever left her and she began to serve⁵⁸ them.

(Mar 1:32) When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and demon-possessed.

(Mar 1:33) The whole town gathered by the door.

(Mar 1:34) So⁵⁹ he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons.⁶⁰ But⁶¹ he would not permit the demons to speak,⁶² because they knew him.⁶³

(Mar 1:35) ***Praying and Preaching***

Then⁶⁴ Jesus⁶⁵ got up early in the morning when it was still very dark, departed, and went out to a deserted place, and there he spent time in prayer.⁶⁶

(Mar 1:36) Simon and his companions searched for him.

(Mar 1:37) When they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you."

(Mar 1:38) He replied,⁶⁷ "Let us go elsewhere, into the surrounding villages, so that I can preach there too. For that

is what I came out here to do."⁶⁸

(Mar 1:39) So⁶⁹ he went into all of Galilee preaching in their synagogues⁷⁰ and casting out demons.

(Mar 1:40) ***Cleansing a Leper***

Now⁷¹ a leper⁷² came to him and fell to his knees, asking for help. "If⁷³ you are willing, you can make me clean," he said.

(Mar 1:41) Moved with compassion,⁷⁴ Jesus⁷⁵ stretched out his hand and touched⁷⁶ him, saying, "I am willing. Be clean!"

(Mar 1:42) The leprosy left him at once, and he was clean.

(Mar 1:43) Immediately Jesus⁷⁷ sent the man⁷⁸ away with a very strong warning.

(Mar 1:44) He told him,⁷⁹ "See that you do not say anything to anyone,⁸⁰ but go, show yourself to a priest, and bring the offering that Moses commanded⁸¹ for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."⁸²

(Mar 1:45) But as the man⁸³ went out he began to announce it publicly and spread the story widely, so that Jesus⁸⁴ was no longer able to enter any town openly but stayed outside in remote places. Still⁸⁵ they kept coming⁸⁶ to him from everywhere.

(Mar 2:1) ***Healing and Forgiving a Paralytic***

Now¹ after some days, when he returned to Capernaum,² the news spread³ that he was at home.

(Guzik)

Mar 2:1-28

Mark 2 - CONTROVERSY WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

A. The power of Jesus to forgive and to heal.

1. (Mar_2:1-4) Jesus teaches and is interrupted.

And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the

word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

a. **Again He entered Capernaum:** In Mark 1, Jesus spent a busy day in **Capernaum**, and then went on a preaching tour all around the cities of Galilee. Now he returns to the fishing town right on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where Peter and his family lived.

b. **There was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door:** Mar_1:28 says that after a dramatic rescue of a demon possessed man, *immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee*. At this point in His ministry, Jesus attracted crowds wherever He went.

c. **And He preached the word to them:** Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus **preached**, yet he still emphasizes the preaching ministry of Jesus as he did in Mar_1:28 and Mar_1:38-39.

i. "It is clear that he was avoiding the streets because they had been turned into a healing campaign. Everywhere he went people besieged him with requests for healing and the casting out of demons, so that he was unable to do what he had come to do primarily, which was to preach the Word." (Steadman)

d. **When they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was:** Because of the crowded room, the friends of the paralyzed man had to lower him down through the roof - certainly, an unusual interruption to a sermon!

i. Not too long ago, a pastor performed a wedding in New York and was interrupted when the church doors flew open, and a man hurried up the aisle, dragging an obviously pregnant woman. The man shouted, "Stop the wedding! You can't let this go on - look at what Manuel did to my sister!"

The bride looked horrified, but the pastor calmly said, "There's no Manuel here." The man looked confused, and said "Oh no! Wrong wedding!" and left the church.

ii. **Uncovered the roof:** The roof was usually accessible by means of an outside stairway, and was made of thatch, dirt or tile laid over beams. It could be taken apart, and the friends of the paralyzed man could lower their friend down to Jesus.

iii. Morgan on **they uncovered the roof:** "Such a rendering is entirely misleading. The force of the word is that they broke up the roof of the house, tearing up the fabric, in order to lower the man down on his pallet into the presence of Jesus."

e. **So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying:** This proved the determination and faith of friends of the paralytic. They counted on Jesus healing their friend, because it sure would be a lot harder to bring him back up through the roof than lowering him down. They counted on him *walking* out of there!

i. The friends of the paralytic loved him, and it is demonstrated because they *brought him to Jesus*.

- Do you *have* friends like that in your life?
- Do you *act* like that kind of a friend towards others?

2. (Mar_2:5-7) Jesus forgives the sins of the paralyzed man.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

a. **When Jesus saw their faith:** Jesus looked up at the four men struggling with crude ropes tied to each corner of the stretcher with a paralytic on it. He looked at them and **saw their faith**.

i. Their faith could be *seen*. Their bold, determined action to bring their friend to Jesus proved they had real faith.

Can it be said of us, that others can see our faith? There is something lacking in our faith if we keep it “all bottled up” and it can never be *seen*.

ii. In this account, the emphasis is on the faith of the *friends of the paralyzed man*. We need to have faith for more than our own needs, but also have faith that Jesus can and will meet the needs of others whom we bring to Him.

b. **Son, your sins are forgiven you:** We can imagine how the friends on the roof felt. They went to a lot of trouble to see their friend healed of his paralysis, and now the teacher only wants to *forgive his sins*! We might imagine them shouting, “No, he’s paralyzed! We wanted him to walk, not to be forgiven!”

i. Yet, Jesus knew what the man’s *real* need was, and what his *greatest* need was. What good was it if the man had two whole legs, and walked right into hell with them?

ii. Whenever there is a problem, almost always, *sin* is the real problem. Jesus got right to the problem.

iii. Jesus did not mean that the paralyzed man was especially sinful, or that his paralysis was directly caused by sin.

Instead, He addressed the man’s greatest need, and the common root of all pain and suffering - man’s sinful condition.

iv. “Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results.” (Wiersbe)

c. **Who can forgive sins but God alone?** The scribes use the right kind of logic. They correctly believe that only God can forgive sins, and they are even correct for examining this new teacher. Their error is in refusing to see who Jesus is: God the Son, who has the authority to forgive sins.

i. “The words suggest a gradual intensification of the fault-finding mood: first a general sense of surprise, then a feeling

of impropriety, then a final advance to the thought: why, this is blasphemy!" (Bruce)

ii. "Again and again during the life of Christ the same dilemma was to re-appear. If he were not divine, then he was indeed a blasphemer; there could be no third way out." (Cole)

iii. Jesus will not disagree with the principle that God alone can forgive sins. This is an important principle for all who struggle with the concept of self-forgiveness, in the sense of "I know God forgives me, but I just can't forgive myself." This principle teaches us that we were never intended to forgive ourselves, and we don't have the authority to do so. The real issue is believing and accepting the forgiveness of God, and allowing the reality of His great forgiveness to overwhelm our feelings about ourselves.

3. (Mar_2:8-12) Jesus demonstrates His authority to forgive sins and His power to heal disease.

But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, '*Your* sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"; He said to the paralytic, I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"

a. **Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus:** In a stunning moment, these scribes knew Jesus could read their evil hearts. This should have helped persuade them that Jesus really was God, having power to forgive sins.

i. It's hard to know if Jesus **perceived** this by His divine nature, or by His human nature with the spiritual gift of discernment or a word of wisdom. Trapp finds Scriptural basis for either approach: "That is, by his Deity, as 1Ti_3:16;

Heb_9:14. Or by his own spirit, as 1Pe_3:8, not by inspiration, as 2Pe_1:21.”

b. **Which is easier:** For men, both real forgiveness and the power to heal are impossible but for God, both are easy. It is a logical assumption that if Jesus has the power to heal the man’s disease, He also has the authority to forgive his sins.

i. In a way, it was “harder” to heal the man than to forgive his sins, because forgiveness is invisible - no one could verify at that moment the man was forgiven before God. Yet it could be instantly verified whether or not the man could walk. Jesus is willing to put Himself to the test!

ii. Jesus also met the scribes on their own scholarly ground. “The Rabbis had a saying, ‘There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him’ . . . to the Jews a sick man was a man with whom God was angry.” (Barclay)

c. **The Son of Man:** Jesus often referred to Himself with this title. The idea is not of “perfect man” or “ideal man” or “common man,” but a reference to Dan_7:13-14, where the coming King of Glory, coming to judge the world, has the title *Son of Man*.

i. Jesus used this title often because in His day, it was a Messianic title free from political and nationalistic sentiment. Jesus could have more commonly referred to Himself as “King” or “Christ” but those titles, in the ears of His audience, sounded like “the One Who Will Defeat the Romans.”

ii. Robertson on **Son of Man:** “Christ’s favourite designation of himself, a claim to be the Messiah in terms that could not easily be attacked.”

d. **Immediately he arose:** Imagine the tension in this scene. The scribes are tense, because Jesus challenged them, and said He would demonstrate He was the Son of God. The paralyzed man was tense because he wondered if Jesus really would heal him. The crowd was tense because they sensed the tension of everyone else. The owner of the

house is tense, because he wonders how much it will cost to repair his roof. And the four friends are tense, because they are getting tired by now. The only one *not* tense was Jesus, because He had perfect peace when He said, “**arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.**” What happened? **Immediately he arose.** Jesus’ *power* to heal and *authority* to forgive sins was **immediately** vindicated.

i. Imagine if Jesus *had failed*. His ministry would be shattered. The crowd slowly makes their way out of the house.

The scribes smile and say, “He can’t heal *or* forgive.” The four men struggle to pull up the paralyzed man who looks more dejected and embarrassed than ever. The homeowner looks at his roof and thinks it was all for nothing.

ii. But Jesus did not, and could not fail, because all He needed to heal this man was *His word*. There is wonderful healing power in the word of Jesus, in the promises of Jesus, for those who *come to Him in faith*. This man came to Jesus in faith, even if it was the “borrowed” faith of his friends.

iii. **Took up his bed:** Why did the man go to the trouble of carrying his bed out of there? He had four friends who would gladly carry it, and it might have been easier to pull it back up out of the roof than carry it through the crowded room. But Jesus told him, **take up your bed and go to your house**, and that is exactly what the man did.

e. **All were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”** Jesus carried the day, and the people were **amazed** to see the power of God in action.

i. “The experts in the law were hoist with their own petard. On their own stated beliefs the man could not be cured, unless he was forgiven. He *was* cured, therefore he *was* forgiven. Therefore Jesus’ claim to forgive sin *must* be true.” (Barclay) B. Jesus eats with sinners.

1. (Mar_2:13-14) Levi is called to be a disciple.

Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw

Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

a. **He taught them:** Jesus fulfills the focus of His ministry as described in Mar_1:38 : *Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.* Jesus knew how to stay on focus.

i. Trapp on **He taught them:** "To teach us, that nothing can be better and more useful to the Church than wholesome teaching; which therefore our Saviour never neglected. It was grown to a proverb at Constantinople, Better the sun should not shine than Chyrstostom not preach."

b. **He saw Levi . . . sitting at the tax office:** Levi (also known as Matthew in Mat_9:9) was a tax collector. In that day, tax collectors were despised as traitors and extortioners.

i. The Jewish people rightly considered them *traitors* because they worked for the Roman government, and had the force of Roman soldiers behind them to make people pay taxes. They were the most visible Jewish collaborators with Rome.

ii. The Jewish people rightly considered them *extortioners* because they could keep whatever they over-collected. A tax collector bid among others for the tax collecting "contract." For example, many tax collectors might want to have the "tax contract" for a city like Capernaum. The Romans awarded the contract to the highest bidder. The man collected taxes, paid the Romans what he promised, and kept the remainder. Therefore, there was a lot of incentive for tax collectors to over-charge and cheat any way they could. It was pure profit for them.

iii. "When a Jew entered the customs service he was regarded as an outcast from society: he was disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session, was excommunicated from the synagogue, and in the eyes of the community his disgrace extended to his family." (Lane)

c. **And He said to him, "Follow Me"** : Understanding how almost everyone hated tax collectors, it is remarkable to see how Jesus loves, and calls, Levi. And it was a well-placed love; Levi responded to Jesus' invitation by leaving his tax collecting business and following Jesus.

i. In one way, this was more than a sacrifice than some of the other disciples made. Peter, James, and John could more easily go back to their fishing business, but it would be hard for Levi to go back to tax collecting. "Tax collector jobs were greatly sought after as a sure way to get rich quickly." (Wessel)

ii. There is archaeological evidence that fish taken from the Sea of Galilee were taxed. So Jesus took as His disciple the taxman that may have been taking money from Peter, James, and John and the other fishermen among the disciples. This might have made for some awkward introductions!

2. (Mar_2:15-17) Jesus is accused of fraternizing with sinners.

Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi's* house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

a. **As He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples:** Most people consider this a "going-away" party Levi threw for his friends upon leaving the tax collecting business. Jesus sat and ate with **tax collectors and sinners**, and eating at the same table with people was a sign of friendship and relationship.

i. Here lies the scandal: Jesus is the friend of sinners! Of course, the sinners knew this, and responded to Jesus' love and friendship: **for there were many, and they followed Him.**

ii. "I am constrained to say that I believe at this very hour one of the secrets of arrest, and one of the reasons for the condition of things in the Christian Church that is troubling us in many ways, is the aloofness of the Christian Church from sinning men and women. We still build our sanctuaries, and set up our standards, and institute our arrangements, and say to the sinning ones: if you will come to us, we will help you!" (Morgan)

b. **When the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners:** The **Pharisees** objected to Jesus keeping company with sinners. The Pharisees were a respected conservative religious group, but were often at odds with Jesus.

i. The name *Pharisee* meant "separated ones." They separated themselves from everything they thought was unholy, and they thought everyone except themselves was separated from the love of God.

c. **Those who are well have no need of physician:** Jesus' answer is both simple and profound. Jesus was the **physician** of the soul, and it makes sense for Him to be with those who are "sick" with sin.

i. Of course His critics were "sick" with sin also, but they didn't know it, refusing to see their own sickness.

ii. If you are sick and need to go to the doctor, why wouldn't you go?

- Perhaps you don't know that you are sick.
- Perhaps you know you are sick, but you think you will get better on your own - you don't know that you *need* to go to the doctor.
- Perhaps you know you are sick, and know you need a doctor, but *do not know* there is a doctor to help you.

- Perhaps you know you are sick, and know you need a doctor, and know there is a doctor, but do not know the doctor *can* help you.
- Perhaps you know you are sick, and know you need a doctor, and know there is a doctor, and know the doctor can help you, but do not know the doctor *wants* to help you.
- Perhaps you know you are sick, and know you need a doctor, and know there is a doctor, and know the doctor can help you, and know the doctor wants to help you, but you know what the doctor will tell you to do and *you just don't want to do it*.

iii. Jesus is the perfect doctor to heal us of our sin.

- He is always available.
- He always makes a perfect diagnosis.
- He provides a complete cure.
- He even pays the bill!

C. Controversies about fasting and the Sabbath.

1. (Mar_2:18-20) Why don't Jesus and His disciples fast?

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."

a. **Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?** The Pharisees were well known for fasting twice a week (Luk_18:12), and it made sense for the disciples of John to fast, because his ministry stressed repentance. Why didn't Jesus and His disciples do the same as these other "spiritual men"?

i. God is not against fasting; He is *for* fasting. But fasting has its time and place in the Christian life. Most of us have *no*

time or *no place* for fasting, and so we are out of balance. These questioners came from the other side.

ii. Some people misuse good gifts like fasting, and make them into self-punishing rituals. Often some will try to make following God a dour thing of self-affliction. In pre-Reformation Germany, there were as many as 161 days a year when pious Christians were expected to either fast or abstain from certain foods.

b. Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? By using the figure of a wedding (**the bridegroom**), Jesus draws on a powerful picture among the Jews. During the weeklong wedding celebration, rabbis declared that *joy* was more important than observing *religious rituals*.

i. Rabbis known in the days of Jesus declared that if the observance of any law came in the way of having a good time during a wedding, you didn't have to keep the law. You could just go and have a good time. "Marriage feasts were times of extraordinary festivity, and even of *riot*, among several people of the east." (Clarke) ii. Jesus' message is bold and clear: "I'm not like the Pharisees or John the Baptist. I am the Messiah, the bridegroom to the people of God. Wherever I am, it is appropriate to have the joy we associate with weddings."

c. The days will come . . . they will fast in those days: Jesus knew His physical, immediate presence would not always be with the disciples. When He was physically gone, it would be more appropriate to fast - but not now.

2. (Mar_2:21-22) The pictures of garments and wineskins and their relation to the new work of Jesus.

No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.

a. **No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment:** The danger of trying to put something new on something old is clear in the illustration of a garment and its patch. But the same principle was true for wineskins. A wineskin would expand under the pressure of fermentation, so if you put new, unfermented wine in an old, brittle wineskin, it was sure to burst.

b. **New wine must be put into new wineskins:** Jesus' point was made clear by these examples. You can't fit His new life into the old forms. Jesus traded fasting for feasting; sackcloth and ashes for a robe of righteousness; a spirit of heaviness for a garment of praise; mourning for joy; law for grace.

i. Through the centuries, old rigid forms could rarely contain the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the generations, God often looks for new wineskins because the old ones won't stretch any further.

ii. The religious establishment of any age is not necessarily pleasing to Jesus. Sometimes it is in direct opposition to, or at least resisting His work.

c. Jesus came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old. This is what salvation is all about. In doing this, Jesus doesn't destroy the old (the law), but He fulfills it, just as an acorn is fulfilled when it grows into an oak tree. There is a sense in which the acorn is gone, but its purpose is fulfilled in greatness.

3. (Mar_2:23-24) Jesus and His disciples are accused of breaking the Sabbath.

Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

a. **His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain:** There was nothing wrong with *what they did*, because their gleaning was not considered stealing according to Deu_23:25. The issue was only *the day* on which they did it.

The Rabbis made an elaborate list of “do” and “don’t” items relevant to the Sabbath, and this violated one of the items on this list.

i. When the **disciples began to pluck the heads of grain**, in the eyes of the religious leaders they were guilty of:

- Reaping.
- Threshing.
- Winnowing.
- Preparing food.

Four violations of the Sabbath in one mouthful!

ii. At this time, Rabbis filled Judaism with elaborate rituals related to the Sabbath and observance of other laws.

Ancient Rabbis taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But you could carry something with the back of your hand, with your foot, with your elbow, or in your ear, your hair, or in the hem of your shirt, or in your shoe or sandal. Or, on the Sabbath, you were forbidden to tie a knot - except a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, you could not tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket!

b. **Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?** Jesus never violated God’s command to observe the Sabbath, or approved of His disciples violating God’s command to observe the Sabbath. But He often broke man’s legalistic additions to that law, and He sometimes *seems* to have deliberately broken them.

4. (Mar_2:25-28) Jesus responds with two principles.

But He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God *in the days* of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?” And He said to them, “The Sabbath

was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

a. **Have you never read what David did:** In referring to David’s use of the “holy bread” in 1Sa_21:1-6, Jesus shows an important principle - *human need is more important than religious ritual*. The Sabbath was meant to serve man (**the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath**).

i. This is exactly what many people, steeped in tradition, simply cannot accept: that what God really wants is mercy before sacrifice (Hos_6:6); that love to others is more important than religious rituals (Isa_58:1-9); that *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise* (Psa_51:17).

ii. “God prohibited work on the Sabbath day, lest servants should be oppressed by their masters, that the labouring beasts might have necessary rest, and that men might have proper opportunity to attend upon his ordinances, and get their souls saved.”

iii. “Any application of the Sabbath Law which operates to the detriment of man is out of harmony with God’s purpose.” (Morgan)

b. **In the days of Abiathar the high priest:** Some find a problem here, because according to 1Sa_21:1, it says that *Ahimelech* was the high priest at that time, and that his son **Abiathar** served as high priest after him (1Sa_22:20, 1Ch_18:16). Most people reconcile 1Sa_21:1 with Jesus’ statement here by saying that both father and son *together* served as co-high priests at that time, or by saying that Jesus simply said this happened **in the days of Abiathar**, that is *while he was alive*, not while he held the office of high priest.

i. “Probably they both officiated in the *high priesthood*; and the *name* of the office was indifferently applied to *either*.” (Clarke) ii. Wiersbe has a different solution: “Also it is likely that our Lord used ‘Abiathar’ to refer to the Old Testament

passage about Abiathar rather than to the man. This is the way the Jews identified sections of the Word since their manuscripts did not have chapters and verses such as we have today in our Bibles.”

c. **Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath:** The second principle is even more dramatic - Jesus declares that He is the **Lord of the Sabbath**. If He, the very **Lord of the Sabbath**, was not offended by His disciple’s actions, then these sideline critics should not have been either.

(Mar 2:2) So many gathered that there was no longer any room, not even by⁴ the door, and he preached the word to them.

(Mar 2:3) Some people⁵ came bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.⁶

(Mar 2:4) When they were not able to bring him in because of the crowd, they removed the roof⁷ above Jesus.⁸ Then,⁹ after tearing it out, they lowered the stretcher the paralytic was lying on.

(Mar 2:5) When Jesus saw their¹⁰ faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."¹¹

(Mar 2:6) Now some of the experts in the law¹² were sitting there, turning these things over in their minds:¹³

(Mar 2:7) "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming!¹⁴ Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

(Mar 2:8) Now¹⁵ immediately, when Jesus realized in his spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts,¹⁶ he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?¹⁷

(Mar 2:9) Which is easier,¹⁸ to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up, take your stretcher, and walk'?

(Mar 2:10) But so that you may know¹⁹ that the Son of Man²⁰ has authority on earth to forgive sins," — he said to the paralytic²¹ — (Mar 2:11) "I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher, and go home."²²

(Mar 2:12) And immediately the man²³ stood up, took his stretcher, and went out in front of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

(Mar 2:13) ***The Call of Levi; Eating with Sinners***

Jesus²⁴ went out again by the sea. The whole crowd came to him, and he taught them.

(Mar 2:14) As he went along, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth.²⁵ "Follow me," he said to him. And he got up and followed him.

(Mar 2:15) As Jesus²⁶ was having a meal²⁷ in Levi's²⁸ home, many tax collectors²⁹ and sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

(Mar 2:16) When the experts in the law³⁰ and the Pharisees³¹ saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"³²

(Mar 2:17) When Jesus heard this he said to them, "Those who are healthy don't need a physician, but those who are sick do.³³ I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

(Mar 2:18) ***The Superiority of the New***

Now³⁴ John's³⁵ disciples and the Pharisees³⁶ were fasting.³⁷ So³⁸ they came to Jesus³⁹ and said, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't fast?"

(Mar 2:19) Jesus⁴⁰ said to them, "The wedding guests⁴¹ cannot fast while the bridegroom⁴² is with them, can they?
⁴³ As long as they have the bridegroom with them they do not fast.

(Mar 2:20) But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them,⁴⁴ and at that time⁴⁵ they will fast.

(Mar 2:21) No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the tear becomes worse.

(Mar 2:22) And no one pours new wine into old wineskins;⁴⁶ otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins will be destroyed. Instead new wine is poured into new wineskins."⁴⁷

(Mar 2:23) ***Lord of the Sabbath***

Jesus⁴⁸ was going through the grain fields on a Sabbath, and his disciples began to pick some heads of wheat⁴⁹ as they made their way.

(Mar 2:24) So⁵⁰ the Pharisees⁵¹ said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is against the law on the Sabbath?"

(Mar 2:25) He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry — (Mar 2:26) how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest⁵² and ate the sacred bread,⁵³ which is against the law⁵⁴ for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to his companions?"⁵⁵

(Mar 2:27) Then⁵⁶ he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for people,⁵⁷ not people for the Sabbath.

(Mar 2:28) For this reason the Son of Man is lord⁵⁸ even of the Sabbath."

(Mar 3:1) ***Healing a Withered Hand***

Then¹ Jesus² entered the synagogue³ again, and a man was there who had a withered⁴ hand.

(Guzik)

Mar 3:1-35

Mark 3 - TWELVE CHOSEN TO FOLLOW JESUS

A. Jesus: hated, adored, and followed.

1. (Mar_3:1-6) The Lord of the Sabbath heals on the Sabbath.

And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely,

whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

a. **A man was there who had a withered hand:** "The man's hand was withered, but God's mercy had still preserved to him the use of his feet: he uses them to bring him to the public worship of God, and Jesus meets and heals him there. How true is the proverb - *It is never so all with us, but it might be much worse!* " (Clarke) b. **They watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath:** The critics of Jesus *expected* Him to heal this man with the withered hand. By their expectation, they admitted that Jesus had the power of God to work miracles. Knowing this, they **watched Him closely . . . so that they might accuse Him**. They knew what Jesus could do yet their knowledge didn't draw them *to* Jesus. It was as if a man could fly, but the authorities wanted to know if he had a pilot's license.

i. "No one could miss them, for, in the synagogue, the front seats were the seats of honour and they were sitting there." (Barclay) The religious leaders **watched Jesus closely**, but with no heart of love for Him. They knew *about* Jesus, but they did not know Him.

ii. They also *knew* Jesus would do something when He saw this man in need. In this sense, these critics had more faith than many of us, because we sometimes doubt that Jesus wants to meet the needs of others.

c. **Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?** In His question to the religious leaders, Jesus emphasizes the truth about the Sabbath: there is never a *wrong* day to do something *truly good*.

i. According to their Sabbath traditions, if you cut your finger, you could stop the bleeding - but you could not put ointment on the cut. You could stop it from getting worse, but you weren't allowed to make it better.

ii. "There are many who call themselves *Christians*, who do more for a *beast* of burden or pleasure than they do for a man for whom Christ died!" (Clarke) d. **He had looked around them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts:** This is one of the few places where Jesus is described as having **anger**, and He is angry at the **hardness** of men's hearts.

i. We know what anger is, but we are rarely angry for the same reason Jesus was angry. Our anger usually comes from feeling injured, not from the outrage that a good man feels in the face of evil.

ii. Jesus was angry because this was a perfect opportunity for these critics of His to change their mind about Him and their traditions. But they refused to change their minds, and rejected Jesus instead. In this we can see that Jesus deliberately used this occasion to provoke a response. Jesus *could* have done this the next day. Jesus *could* have done it privately. But He chose to do it at this time and place.

e. **Stretch out your hand:** In this, Jesus commanded the man with the withered hand to do something impossible. How can you **stretch out** a paralyzed hand? But as the man put forth effort, God did the rest. God never commands us without enabling us.

i. "This man might have reasoned thus: 'Lord, my hand is *withered*; how then can I stretch it out? Make it whole first, and afterwards I will do as thou commandest.' This may appear *reasonable*, but in his case it would have been *foolishness*. At the command of the Lord he made the effort,

and in making it the cure was effected!" (Clarke) ii. "Faith disregards apparent impossibilities, where there is a command and promise of God. The *effort* to believe is, often, that *faith* by which the soul is *healed*." (Clarke) f. **The Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him:** Jesus did nothing but a wonderful miracle. In response, two parties of former enemies (the **Pharisees** and the **Herodians**) can agree together in one cause: to **destroy** Jesus.

i. Luk_6:11 says that the critics of Jesus were *filled with rage* when Jesus healed this man. Which was more a violation of the Sabbath: When Jesus healed a man, or when these hate-filled men **plotted** the murder of a godly man who never sinned against anybody?

ii. A stanza from *My Song Is Love Unknown* by Samuel Crossman catches this irony: Why, what has my Lord done,
To cause this rage and spite?

He made the lame to run

And gave the blind their sight.

What injuries! Yet these are why,

What injuries, yet these are why

The Lord Most High so cruelly dies.

iii. "The Herodians were not a religious party; they were a group of Jews who were sympathetic to King Herod and supported his rule." (Wiersbe)

2. (Mar_3:7-12) Multitudes come to Jesus.

But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him.

And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

a. **Jerusalem . . . Idumea . . . beyond the Jordan . . .**

Tyre and Sidon: The crowds came to Jesus near the Sea of Galilee from distant places. Yet it seems that this crowd was attracted to Jesus more because of His miraculous works than because of His message (**when they heard how many things He was doing**).

i. It is wonderful for people to be attracted to Jesus. But if their focus is on *what He can do for them* instead of *Who He is*, they will not follow Him for long.

b. **Fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God"** : "The demons addressed Jesus as the divine Son of God in a futile attempt to render him harmless. These cries of recognition were designed to control him and strip him of his power, in accordance with the conception that knowledge of the precise name or quality of a person confers mastery over him." (Lane)

3. (Mar_3:13-15) Jesus chooses the twelve.

And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

a. **And He went up on the mountain:** Jesus was at a critical point in His ministry: • He offended the traditions of the religious leadership, and they plot His destruction.

• The political leadership plots His destruction.

• Great crowds follow Him, but they are not interested in spiritual things, and could be quickly turned against Jesus.

So what did Jesus do? He spent a whole night in prayer (Luk_6:12) and then chose twelve disciples.

b. **Then He appointed twelve:** In one sense, there was nothing in Jesus' three years of ministry before the cross

more important than this. These were the men who would carry on what He started; without them the work of Jesus would never extend through the whole world. Therefore, He makes the choice with God's wisdom: He **called to Him those He Himself wanted**.

i. "The evangelist telling us that he called to him which of his disciples he would, lets us know, that he chose them, and not they him; that the choice of them was of his free grace and mercy." (Poole)

c. **He called to Him**: A disciple was a student, but not in a classroom and lecture sense. A disciple learned by being with a hearing from his master. A disciple was an *apprentice*, and learned from the master first hand.

i. The disciples belonged to Jesus. Disciples never belong to any man; they only belong to Jesus. They are *His* disciples.

d. Then, from among this circle of followers, Jesus **appointed twelve**. Why? **That they might be with Him**. The first job of the disciples was simple to **be with** Jesus, to learn from being around Him. Then, in a secondary sense He chose them **that He might send them out to preach**.

i. A preacher will only be as useful to Jesus to the extent that He has "been with" Jesus. There is little done for eternal good by those who preach without having a real, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

ii. "A disciple was a learner, a student, but in the first century a student did not simply study a subject; he followed a teacher. There is an element of personal attachment in 'disciple' that is lacking in 'student.'" (Morris)

e. Why did Jesus choose **twelve** disciples? Because this is the foundation of the new chosen people, and as Israel had twelve tribes, Jesus would have **twelve** apostles.

f. When someone has *been with* Jesus, and is *sent out* to serve Him, they can expect that Jesus will give them to **power** to serve Him, including the power to see miraculous works (**heal sicknesses and to cast out demons**) done in their midst.

i. “The business of a ministers of Christ is, 1st. To *preach* the *Gospel*. 2nd. To be the *physician* of souls. And 3rd. To *wage* war with the *devil*, and destroy his kingdom.” (Clarke) 4. (Mar_3:16-19) The twelve disciples listed.

Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

a. How many of these men do we really know anything about? Of **Peter**, **James**, **John**, and **Judas** we know something about. But of the other eight, we pretty much only know their names. Their fame is reserved for heaven, where their names are on the twelve foundations of God’s heavenly city (Rev_21:14).

i. The Bible values fame, but fame in heaven. For the most part, this group was not “famous” in the sense we think of fame in the Twentieth Century. We must learn to value and respect *heaven’s* fame, not modern fame.

b. There are many interesting connections with this group. There are brothers (**James** and **John**, **Peter** and **Andrew**); business associates (**Peter**, **James**, and **John**, were all fishermen); opposing political viewpoints (**Matthew** the Roman-collaborating tax collector, and **Simon**, the Roman-hating zealot); and one who would betray Jesus (**Judas Iscariot**).

i. Mark gives a “note for the Gentiles” by translating **Boanerges** - which means **Sons of Thunder**, perhaps a reference to the fiery disposition of James and John (as they display in Luk_9:54).

ii. **Canaanite** has nothing to do with geography. It is the Hebrew word for “zealous,” identifying Simon as a member of the radical Zealot party.

iii. “Judas’s surname of Iscariot probably indicates that he was a man from Kerioth: he thus seems to have been the

only Judean among the twelve.” (Geldenhuis)

iv. It seems that the names of the twelve disciples are usually arranged in pairs. “Since Jesus sent His Apostles out two by two, this was a logical way to list them.” (Wiersbe)

- Peter and Andrew.
- James and John.
- Philip and Bartholomew (also called Nathanael in Joh_1:45).
- Thomas (his name means “twin”) and Matthew (Levi).
- James, son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus (also called Judas, son of James in Joh_14:22).
- Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot.

c. Why did Jesus choose Judas?

- It wasn’t because Jesus didn’t know how he would turn out. Jesus told His disciples that He chose them, and knew one of them was a devil.

- It wasn’t because He no others to choose. He could raise up followers from stones, so He could easily have found someone else.

- It wasn’t because He wanted a scandalous person, or a “bad boy” - we read of no scandal surrounding Judas during Jesus’ ministry. The other disciples did far more stupid things during their three years with Jesus.

i. “We ought to believe that God had wise ends in the permission of this, and that Christ did out of infinite wisdom do this, though we possibly are not able to give a satisfactory account in the case.” (Poole)

ii. A man once asked a theologian, “Why did Jesus choose Judas Iscariot to be his disciple?” The teacher replied, “I don’t know, but I have an even harder question: Why did Jesus choose me?”

B. Jesus answers accusations.

1. (Mar_3:20-21) An accusation from His own family.

Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. But when His own people heard

about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

a. **So that they could not so much as eat bread:** The idea is that the huge crowds so pressed upon Jesus and the disciples that they did not have the time or the space to eat.

b. **His own people:** This refers to Jesus' family and close friends. Since Jesus grew up in Galilee and practiced His ministry there, there were many that knew Him before this time of wide popularity.

c. **He is out of His mind:** Why would some from **His own people** think that Jesus was **out of His mind**?

- He left a prosperous business to become an itinerant preacher.

- The religious and political leaders plotted to murder Him, but He did not back down (Mar_3:6). They were afraid for Jesus' sake.

- Huge crowds began to follow Jesus, and they knew how such fame and attention and celebrity can go to someone's head (Mar_3:7-8).

- He showed spiritual power and ministry He had never really shown earlier in His life (Mar_3:9-11). Was something very wrong?

- He picked such an unlikely group of disciples that His judgment could fairly be questioned (Mar_3:13-19).

- But there was one last straw: the pressures of this incredible ministry made Him miss regular mealtimes (**they could not so much as eat bread**).

i. Jesus constantly faced the rejection of the religious and political leaders of the day, and in a way their hatred of Jesus made sense - He actually threatened their status quo. Undoubtedly, it was far more painful and challenging for Jesus to deal with the way **His own people** rejected Him. It isn't easy to be profoundly *misunderstood* as you try to walk with God. "When the Lord said 'a man's enemies will be those in his own home' (see Mat_10:36), He may well have been speaking from bitter experience." (Cole)

ii. The brothers of Jesus didn't believe in Him until after His resurrection, and during His earthly ministry they prodded Him to "prove Himself." (Joh_7:3-5)

iii. Mark records no answer, no reaction of Jesus to their comment, **"He is out of His mind."** If someone thinks you are crazy, there probably isn't much you can do about it without compromising.

2. (Mar_3:22) An accusation from the religious leaders.

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

a. **The scribes who came down from Jerusalem:** This is an official delegation of experts **from Jerusalem**, coming to Galilee, to observe and assess the ministry of Jesus. The opinion of these **scribes** carried a lot of weight with many people.

i. "It is possible that they were official emissaries from the Great Sanhedrin who came to examine Jesus' miracles and to determine whether Capernaum should be declared a 'seduced city,' the prey of an apostate preacher." (Lane)

b. **He has Beelzebub:** Actually, they accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan. "He *hath* Beelzebub, implying that Beelzebub hath Him, using Him as his agent. The expression points to something more than an alliance [but] to possession, and than on a grand scale." (Expositor's)

i. They wouldn't say that Jesus was possessed by just *any* demon, but by Satan himself. This was "an involuntary compliment to the exceptional power and greatness of Jesus." (Expositor's)

ii. This wasn't the only time Jesus was insulted like this.

- "He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?" (Joh_10:20)

- "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (Joh_8:48)

- "We were not born of fornication." (Joh_8:41)

- “A glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Luk_7:34)

- “You have a demon.” (Joh_7:20)

c. **By the ruler of demons He casts out demons:** The Gospel of Luke (Luk_11:14) tells us this accusation came in response to a dramatic demonic deliverance. The religious leaders attributed this working of Jesus to Satan (**Beelzebub**).

i. Jesus was *misunderstood* by His own people, but He was viciously - and cynically - attacked by **the scribes who came down from Jerusalem**. Because of their official position, this is the first step in the plot to destroy Jesus referred to in Mar_3:6. Before they can destroy Him, they first must discredit Jesus in the eyes of the multitude.

ii. It takes a very hard heart to look at the work of Jesus and to say, “This is the work of Satan.” We might excuse Jesus’ own for misunderstanding Him, but this shows a much worse spiritual condition.

d. **Beelzebub** clearly refers to Satan, but it is a difficult name to analyze. It may have been coined because it sounds similar to the Hebrew phrase for “Lord of the Flies.”

i. “It is supposed that this idol was the same with *Baalzebub*, the *god fly*, worshipped at Ekron . . . who had his name changed afterwards by the Jews to *Baal zebul*, the *dung god*, a title of utmost *contempt*.” (Clarke) 3. (Mar_3:23-27) Jesus answers those who attributed His work to Satan.

So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.”

a. **How can Satan cast out Satan?** Jesus shows that if He is an agent of Satan, and works against Satan, then surely

Satan's kingdom is in civil war and will not stand - Satan won't work *against* himself.

b. **No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods:** With this, Jesus answers the charge that He is in league with the Devil. He says, "I'm not under Satan. Instead, I'm proving that I am stronger than he is."

c. **Unless he first binds the strong man:** In this parable Satan is the **strong man**, who guards what belongs to him. Jesus' ministry, both in the case of casting the demon out of the man who was mute, and in the broader sense, is defeating this **strong man**.

d. **Then he will plunder his house:** Jesus looks at every life delivered from Satan's domination and says, "I'm plundering the kingdom of Satan one life at a time." There is *nothing* in our life that *must* stay under Satan's domination. The **one who binds the strong man and will plunder his house** is our risen Lord.

i. It's a reasonable question: what are you doing in Satan's house anyway? The truth is that because of the sin of Adam, we were *born* in Satan's house. Then we also stayed on by our own choice. But when Jesus comes into our life, there is *never* a reason for someone to be in Satan's house.

4. (Mar_3:28-30) Jesus warns the religious leaders about the unforgivable sin.

"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"; because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

a. **He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness:** This blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is serious indeed. The person guilty of this sin is **subject to eternal condemnation**. In other Gospels (such as in Luk_12:10) this sin is described as "unforgivable."

b. **Because they said, He has an unclean spirit:** These religious leaders were in danger of blasphemy of the Holy

Spirit because they looked at the perfectly good and wonderful work of God in Jesus, and officially pronounced it the evil of Satan. This points to a settled rejection of heart against Jesus - possible evidence of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

i. "Notice that these men had not yet committed the unpardonable sin . . . Otherwise Jesus would never have warned them. By his own words, there is no use warning a man who has committed the unpardonable sin; he is beyond help." (Steadman)

ii. It also reminds us of the danger of being a *negative* Christian. Though we must show discernment, we should never be too quick to say something is of the devil. We shouldn't let our Christian lives be defined by what we are *against*.

c. What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

i. This idea of one sin that ends in **eternal condemnation** has troubling many. Some feel totally defeated and hopeless before God, convinced that they have committed this unpardonable sin.

ii. We recognize the terrible danger of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and our need to avoid this sin at all cost. At the same time, we guard our hearts against the unwarranted accusation of this sin.

iii. We understand what the blasphemy of Holy Spirit is by first understanding what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is all about. Regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit Jesus said, *when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment* (Joh_16:8), and that *He will testify of Me* (Joh_15:26).

iv. Therefore, when we persistently reject the work the Holy Spirit wants to do in us, when we have a continued, settled rejection of what He wants to tell us about Jesus, then we blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

v. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven - not because it is a sin "too big" for God to forgive, but

because it is an attitude of heart that cares nothing for God's forgiveness. It never has forgiveness because it never wants forgiveness God's way.

vi. The way to *not* blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to receive Jesus Christ today! Simply stop resisting His work of drawing you to Jesus, and surrender your life to Jesus today.

vii. "These words were never intended to torment anxious souls honestly desiring to know Christ, but they stand out as a blazing beacon warning of the danger of persisting in the rejection of the Spirit's testimony of Christ, until the seared conscience no longer responds to the gospel message." (Ironsides)

5. (Mar_3:31-35) Jesus describes His true family relationships.

Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

a. **His brothers and His mother:** Why had they **sent to Him**? Perhaps to carry out the plan described in Mar_3:21, to *lay hold of Him*, thinking that Jesus was *out of His mind*.

b. **Who is My mother, or My brothers?** We might have expected that Jesus' family would have special privileges before Him. It almost surprises us that they do not.

i. **Brothers:** Jesus plainly had brothers. The Roman Catholic idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary is in contradiction to the plain meaning of the Bible.

ii. Many reliable manuscripts add *and Your sisters* to **Your mothers and Your brothers**. "According to a reading in several MSS., these included *sisters* among those present."

(Expositor's) iii. The brothers of Jesus never seemed to be

supportive of His ministry before His death and resurrection (Joh_7:5).

c. **Whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother:** Mark 3 ends with a huge contrast.

There are religious leaders in danger of damnation, and an invitation to *be part of Jesus' family*.

i. "The right way to be ennobled indeed, and inrighted to Christ and his kingdom, is, to believe in his name, and obey his will. This, this is to become Christ's brother, and sister, and mother. Sister is named, to show that no sex is excluded. And mother last mentioned, that the prerogative of the flesh may be set aside and disacknowledged."

(Trapp)

(Mar 3:2) They watched⁵ Jesus⁶ closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath,⁷ so that they could accuse him.

(Mar 3:3) So he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Stand up among all these people."⁸

(Mar 3:4) Then⁹ he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or evil, to save a life or destroy it?" But they were silent.

(Mar 3:5) After looking around¹⁰ at them in anger, grieved by the hardness of their hearts,¹¹ he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.¹²

(Mar 3:6) So¹³ the Pharisees¹⁴ went out immediately and began plotting with the Herodians,¹⁵ as to how they could assassinate¹⁶ him.

(Mar 3:7) ***Crowds by the Sea***

Then¹⁷ Jesus went away with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him.¹⁸ And from Judea, (Mar 3:8) Jerusalem,¹⁹ Idumea, beyond the Jordan River,²⁰ and around Tyre²¹ and Sidon²² a great multitude came to him when they heard about the things he had done.

(Mar 3:9) Because of the crowd, he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him so the crowd²³ would not press

toward him.

(Mar 3:10) For he had healed many, so that all who were afflicted with diseases pressed toward him in order to touch him.

(Mar 3:11) And whenever the unclean spirits²⁴ saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."

(Mar 3:12) But²⁵ he sternly ordered them not to make him known.²⁶

(Mar 3:13) ***Appointing the Twelve Apostles***

Now²⁷ Jesus went up the mountain²⁸ and called for those he wanted, and they came to him.

(Mar 3:14) He²⁹ appointed twelve (whom he named apostles³⁰),³¹ so that they would be with him and he could send them to preach (Mar 3:15) and to have authority to cast out demons.

(Mar 3:16) He appointed twelve:³² To Simon³³ he gave the name Peter;

(Mar 3:17) to James and his brother John, the sons of Zebedee,³⁴ he gave the name Boanerges (that is, "sons of thunder"); (Mar 3:18) and Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew,³⁵ Matthew, Thomas,³⁶ James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus,³⁷ Simon the Zealot,³⁸

(Mar 3:19) and Judas Iscariot,³⁹ who betrayed him.⁴⁰

(Mar 3:20) ***Jesus and Beelzebul***

Now⁴¹ Jesus⁴² went home, and a crowd gathered so that they were not able to eat.

(Mar 3:21) When his family⁴³ heard this they went out to restrain him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

(Mar 3:22) The experts in the law⁴⁴ who came down from Jerusalem⁴⁵ said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul,"⁴⁶ and, "By the ruler⁴⁷ of demons he casts out demons."

(Mar 3:23) So⁴⁸ he called them and spoke to them in parables:⁴⁹ "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

(Mar 3:24) If⁵⁰ a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom will not be able to stand.

(Mar 3:25) If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

(Mar 3:26) And if Satan rises against himself and is divided, he is not able to stand and his end has come.

(Mar 3:27) But no one is able to enter a strong man's⁵¹ house and steal his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can thoroughly plunder his house.⁵²

(Mar 3:28) I tell you the truth,⁵³ people will be forgiven for all sins, even all the blasphemies they utter.⁵⁴

(Mar 3:29) But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin"⁵⁵

(Mar 3:30) (because they said, "He has an unclean spirit"⁵⁶).

(Mar 3:31) ***Jesus' True Family***

Then⁵⁷ Jesus'⁵⁸ mother and his brothers⁵⁹ came. Standing⁶⁰ outside, they sent word to him, to summon him.

(Mar 3:32) A crowd was sitting around him and they said to him, "Look, your mother and your brothers⁶¹ are outside looking for you."

(Mar 3:33) He answered them and said, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"⁶²

(Mar 3:34) And looking at those who were sitting around him in a circle, he said, "Here⁶³ are my mother and my brothers!

(Mar 3:35) For whoever does the will of God is⁶⁴ my brother and sister and mother."

(Mar 4:1) ***The Parable of the Sower***

Again he began to teach by the lake. Such a large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there while¹ the whole crowd was on the shore by the lake.

(Guzik)

Mar 4:1-41

Mark 4 - KINGDOM PARABLES AND KINGDOM POWER

A. The parable of the soils and the purpose of parables.

1. (Mar_4:1-9) Presentation of the parable of the soils.

And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat *in it* on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, *that* some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some *seed* fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other *seed* fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

a. **He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea:** Jesus often used a boat as His "pulpit" (Mar_2:9). It gave Him a place to speak away from the press of the crowds, provided good acoustics, and probably a nice backdrop.

i. When Jesus taught from **a boat**, surely that was a new thing. We can imagine some critic saying, "You can't do that! Teaching belongs in the synagogue or in some other appropriate place." It would be easy to come up with objections: "The damp air might make people sick" or "There are a lot of mosquitoes down at the shore" or "Someone might drown." But Jesus knew that teaching from a boat suited His purposes well enough.

b. **Then He taught them many things by parables:** The word **parable** comes from the idea of "to set along side." As Jesus used parables, it means to set a spiritual truth along side a daily truth of living.

i. It takes skill to make a good parable. Sometimes the things we use to explain or illustrate work against us instead of for us. Here are some examples from High School students of bad analogies in essays:

- His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free.
- Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze.
- The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't.
- From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and "Jeopardy" comes on at 7 p.m. instead of 7:30.
- She caught your eye like one of those pointy hook latches that used to dangle from screen doors and would fly up whenever you banged the door open again.
- John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who had also never met.

c. **A sower went out to sow:** In this parable, Jesus described something they were all familiar with - a farmer casting seed on the ground, and the seed falling on different types of soil.

d. The seed fell on three areas without lasting success: on the pathway (**the wayside**), on the rocky ground (**on rock**), and on the thorny ground (**among thorns**). But some of the seed fell on **good ground**.

i. Why wouldn't the farmer only cast seed on good soil? Some fell on the pathway by accident (**some fell by the wayside**), but most of the seed was sown on ground that was plowed *after* the seed was cast. Therefore, you didn't know where rocks were or where thorns might grow.

e. **Some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred:** Of the seed that fell on the good ground, all of it produced - but not all produced to the same degree.

f. Though this is commonly called *the parable of the sower*, it should really be called *the parable of the soils*. The

difference is never the *seed*, but on the kind of *soil* it lands on.

2. (Mar_4:10-12) The purpose of parables.

But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and *their* sins be forgiven them.’”

a. **The twelve asked Him about the parable:** The spiritual meaning of the parable was not immediately apparent. The disciples of Jesus, including the twelve, didn’t know what Jesus meant, and they **asked Him about the parable**.

b. **To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God:** Jesus will answer the disciples’ question about the parable, but first He will teach them why He uses parables.

i. The disciples, who wanted the things of God, were **given to know the mystery of the kingdom** - they could be spoken to plainly. But often, others were taught with parables.

i. In the Bible, a mystery isn’t something you can’t figure out. It is something that you would never know unless God revealed it to you. In the Biblical sense of the idea, you may know exactly what a mystery is, yet it is still a mystery, because you would not have known unless God revealed it.

iii. Notice that even with this “simple” parable, the disciples themselves do not understand (Mar_4:10; Mar_4:13; Mar_4:33-34).

c. **To those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive’:** Parables, in their spiritual function, are more like riddles or puzzles than easy illustrations. They can be understood by those who have right “key.”

i. A parable isn't exactly an *illustration*. A good teacher can illustrate by stating a truth, and then *illustrating* the truth through a story or an analogy. But when Jesus used parables, He didn't start by stating a truth. Instead, the parable was like a doorway. Jesus' listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him. If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life.

ii. If you don't understand the *key* to the parable, you don't understand it at all. We can imagine what different people in Jesus' audience might have thought when He taught this parable with no explanation.

- The farmer thought, "He's telling me that I have to be more careful in the way I cast my seed. I guess I have been wasting an awful lot."

- The politician thought, "He's telling me that I need to begin a farm education program to help farmers more efficiently cast their seed. This will be a big boost in my reelection campaign."

- The newspaper reporter thought, "He's telling me that there is a big story here about the bird problem and how it affects the farming community. That's a great idea for a series in the newspaper."

- The salesman thought, "He's encouraging me in my fertilizer sales. Why, I could help that farmer more than he knows if he only used my product."

iii. But none of them could understand the *spiritual* meaning until Jesus explained the key to them: *The sower sows the word* (Mar_4:14). If you miss the key, you miss the whole parable. If you think the seed represent money, you miss the parable. If you think the seed represents love, you miss the parable. If you think the seed represents hard work, you miss the parable. You can only understand it by understanding the key: *The sower sows the word*.

iv. “Without the key the parables are hard to understand, for parables veil the truth of the kingdom being state in terms of another realm. Without a spiritual truth and insight they are unintelligible.” (Robertson)

d. **Lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them:** By quoting this passage from Isa_6:9, Jesus explained why He used parables. In teaching by parables, Jesus offered His hearers the opportunity to dig deep and find the truth, or to turn a blind eye to an interesting story. This would avoid a greater condemnation for having rejected a clearly understood truth.

i. Jesus didn’t use parables to blind people, but because they were blind. “Therefore Jesus used the parabolic method, not in order to blind them, but in order to make them look again; not in order to prevent them coming to forgiveness, but in order to lure them toward a new attention.” (Morgan)

ii. “So, that their guilt may not accumulate, the Lord no longer addresses them directly in explicit teachings during the period immediately preceding His crucifixion, but in parables.” (Geldenhuys)

e. In light of this, how blessed are those who *do* understand the parables of Jesus. Not only do they gain the benefit of the spiritual truth illustrated; they also display some measure of responsiveness to the Holy Spirit.

3. (Mar_4:13-20) Parable of the sower explained.

And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they*

are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

a. **Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?** Jesus considered this parable as essential to understanding His other parables.

b. **The sower sows the word:** Jesus says that the word of God is like a seed. It gets “planted” in our heart, and then has the potential to bear fruit. But not every seed grows into a plant and bears fruit. The kind of soil it lands on makes all the difference.

i. 1Pe_1:23 also says that the word of God is like a seed. It says that we have *been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.*

ii. The natural tendency is for the audience to critique the preacher. But here, Jesus the preacher critiques His audience. The issue is how well they will hear, not how well He will preach.

iii. We learn something else here: It is by *preaching* that the seed is sown. You can study the seed, categorize the seed, analyze the seed, know the seed, or even love the seed. But if you don’t sow it, nothing will grow.

iv. But if the seed is **the word**, then every preacher must make sure he uses good seed. “It is a high offence against God to *change* the *Master’s seed*, to *mix it*, or to sow *bad seed* in the *place* of it.” (Clarke)

c. **These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown:** Some people are like the ground on the pathway.

This was hard ground because people walked on it all the time, and beat it down into a path or a road. People like **the wayside** are hard to the word of God, and they allow no room for the seed of the word in their lives - it never enters.

i. “There are some that hear the word, but never meditate upon it, never lay it to their hearts, never cover it with second thoughts.” (Poole)

ii. **Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts:** It is important to see that **Satan** doesn’t want the word of God to take root in a person’s heart. Like a bird swooping down and snatching a seed, he wants to “remove” the seed of the word from the “soil” of a person’s heart. This is Satan’s preferred result. He wants to keep the word from ever taking a place in a person’s life, so they can never be fruitful to God.

iii. “Hard hearts must be ‘plowed up’ before they can receive the seed, and this can be a painful experience (Jer_4:3; Hos_10:12).” (Wiersbe)

d. **The ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time:** Some people are like the ground that is rocky, but covered with a thin layer of topsoil. They receive the seed of the word with a flash of enthusiasm that quickly burns out.

i. **When tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble:** The “**stony ground**” hearer isn’t attacked directly by Satan, but by **tribulation or persecution**. Jesus knew that many have an immediately favorable reaction to the word of God, but they give it up quickly when it becomes difficult to follow Jesus.

ii. **No root in themselves:** Some professing Christians have no root in themselves. Their root is in their parents, or in the Christian friends, or in the pastor, or in enthusiastic surroundings. “Then there are many more, *whose religion must be sustained by enthusiastic surroundings*. They seem to have been baptized in boiling, water; and unless the temperature around them is kept up to that point, they

wither away . . . the religion that is born of mere excitement will die when the excitement is over.” (Spurgeon)

e. **The ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful:** Some people are like the seed that fell among the thorns. They receive the word but allow the interests and cares of this world choke it out.

i. We might say this ground is *too* fertile. The word of God grows there, but so does everything else. And everything else soon begins to crowd out the word of God.

f. **The ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred:** Some people are like the good ground, and they **accept** the word, **and bear fruit**, thus fulfilling the purpose of the seed.

i. This parable shows that when the word is received as it should be, *something happens* - fruit is produced. If nothing happens, then the word is not being received as it should.

g. These four categories apply to those who hear the gospel of salvation, but they also apply to those who are already saved who continually hear the word of God. How do you hear it?

- Do you let Satan take it right away?
- Do you take it but then immediately ignore it?
- Do you allow the cares of this world to make your hearing of the word of no effect?
- Do you keep the word and see it bear fruit in your life?

i. “This parable deals with the problem that is greatest of all to the thoughtful mind: how is it that the scribes and Pharisees can so misrepresent Him? And how is it that His kindred and disciples can totally fail to comprehend Him? Why does not the hearing of the doctrine produce the same result in every heart?” (Cole)

ii. "The Pharisees were not a button the better for all those heart-piercing sermons of our Saviour, nay, much the worse." (Trapp)

B. The responsibility of those who understand the Word of God.

1. (Mar_4:21-23) They are responsible to expose and publish the truth - that is, the word of God.

Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

a. **There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed:** By its very nature, light is meant to be revealed. Truth is the same way, and God promises that it will be revealed.

b. **But that it should come to light:** We must not hide this light. If you have the truth of God, you have a solemn responsibility to spread that truth in whatever way God gives you opportunity, even as someone who has the cure for a life-threatening disease has the moral responsibility to spread that cure. God didn't light your lamp so that it would remain hidden.

2. (Mar_4:24-25) When we hear the word, we become accountable; so we must take care how we hear.

Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

a. **Take heed what you hear:** Christians should be careful to put themselves under good teachers, teaching the whole counsel of God's Word. There are many reasons for choosing a church, but one of the big ones must be, "Jesus told me to **take heed what you hear**, and I know this church teaches the whole counsel of God's Word."

b. **With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you:** This is *why* it is important to **take heed what you hear**. God will respond to us as we have responded to Him and His word.

i. Charles Spurgeon said, "The hearer of the gospel will get measure for measure, and the measure shall be his own measure." And it works out just this way. To the one with no interest in the gospel, the preaching of the gospel seems uninteresting. To the one who wants to find fault with the church or the preacher, they find plenty of faults.

On the other hand - the more blessed hand - those who hunger find food, and those who want the solid truth receive something from any faithful ministry.

c. **And to you who hear, more will be given:** When we hear the word of God, and receive it with gladness, more will be given to us from God's spiritual riches.

i. **More will be given:** More what? More desire to hear. More understanding of what you hear. More personal possession of the blessings you hear about.

ii. **More will be given:** Jesus reminds us that spiritual growth follows momentum, positive or negative. When we have the godly habits of receiving the word and living it, more is built on to that. When we lose those godly habits, they are extremely difficult to get back.

C. Two more kingdom parables.

1. (Mar_4:26-29) The parable of the growing seed.

And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

a. When the farmer **should scatter seed on the ground**, and it grows **by night**, and he sees the seed sprouted in the morning, he has just worked as a partner with God. Man has

done what he could do - plant the seed; and God has done what only He can do: grow the seed.

i. This shows that the word of God works *invisibly* within us. God promised that His word would accomplish the purpose for which He sends it (Isa_55:11). So when you hear the word it works in you - even as you sleep! It works in you spiritually, in a way that it is invisible to our eyes.

ii. "The secret of growth is in the seed, not in the soil nor in the weather nor in the cultivating. These all help, but the seed spontaneously works according to its own nature." (Robertson)

b. **He himself does not know how:** *How* exactly the seed grows is a mystery to the farmer. Though it grows by a process he cannot see nor fully account for, he has faith in the growing process. So it is with the Kingdom of God: we work in partnership with God, yet the real work is left up to Him - we trust in a process we cannot see nor fully account for.

i. Because Jesus said that the Parable of the Soils was a key for understanding other parables (Mar_4:13), we can say that the **seed** He speaks of here represents the Word of God, as it did in the Parable of the Soils. Therefore, with this parable, Jesus shows the way the word of God works with hidden and mysterious power, just like a **seed**.

ii. The Bible isn't just an instruction manual or a list of rules to follow. It lives and works its life into us. It has hidden and mysterious power to change our life. This book has wrestled with me; this book has slapped me around.

This book has comforted me; this book has overwhelmed my heart with the joy of heaven itself. This book has healed me; this book has wounded me. This book has smiled on me; this book has frowned on me. This book has wept with me, and it has sung joyfully with me; it shouts to me, whispers to me, and preaches to me. The idea that a *preacher* lends life to God's Word is wrong; the only thing a preacher has to give

to the word is a voice. Like a seed, the word of God has a hidden and mysterious power.

c. **The harvest has come:** Just as a field's crop may be unnoticed when first planted, but can't be missed when mature, so it is with the Kingdom of God. It has small beginnings, and its root may be small, but when God develops the work it cannot be missed.

i. This is the glory of Jesus' work in us. It was prophetically said of Him, *a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench* (Isa_42:3). Jesus takes something as small and insignificant as a seed, buries it, and makes it rise up to something glorious. So, we should never despise the day of small things! (Zec_4:10) 2. (Mar_4:30-34) The mustard seed.

Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? *It is* like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade." And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear *it*. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

a. **It grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches:** Some regard this as a beautiful picture of the church growing so large that it provides refuge for all of the world. But this mustard seed plant has grown into a monstrosity, and it harbors **birds** - who in the parables are emissaries of Satan, according to the foundational parable of the soils (Mar_4:13).

i. "The growth of the kingdom will not result in the conversion of the world. In fact, some of the growth will give opportunity for Satan to get in and go to work!" (Wiersbe)

b. Jesus, in considering the growth of the work of God, reminds us that size and status are not necessarily benefits.

There has never been a great curse upon the world than corrupt Christianity, of the form of godliness without the power.

c. **When they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples:** “This does not necessarily imply that the multitude understood nothing, but only that Jesus, by further talk, made the disciples understand *better*.” (Expositor’s) D. Jesus calms a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

1. (Mar_4:35-39) Jesus rebukes the stormy Sea of Galilee.

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.” Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

a. **Let us cross over to the other side:** Jesus made a promise to His disciples. He didn’t say, “Let us perish in the middle of the Sea of Galilee.” He promised His disciples that they would **cross over to the other side**.

i. “The Lake of Galilee is 13 miles long at its longest, and 8 miles wide at its widest. At this particular part it was about 5 miles across.” (Barclay)

ii. “Jonah ended up in a storm because of his disobedience, but the disciples got into a storm because of their *obedience* to the Lord.” (Wiersbe)

b. **They took Him along in the boat as He was:** Jesus taught the multitude from a boat just off the shore of the Sea of Galilee. When the teaching was finished, He didn’t return to shore. He just said to the disciples, “**Let us cross over to the other side**.”

i. “The disciples sailed off with him just as he was in the boat out of which he had been teaching the people; and they did

not wait to provide any accommodations for the passage.” (Clarke)

ii. “Now the teaching was over; He was weary; He was craving for a period of rest. And so He bade His disciples to cross the lake, and that is the moment to which our text refers - they took Him even as He was . . . They had not waited till any cloaks were brought. They had not sent a messenger ashore. Weary, and probably hungry, they had taken Him even as He was.” (Morrison)

iii. We must take Him as He was.

- Not as we wish Jesus was.
- Not as others may present Jesus.
- Not as you might see Him in the lives of others.

c. **And a great windstorm arose:** The Sea of Galilee is well known for its sudden, violent storms. The severity of this storm is shown by the reaction of the disciples (**we are perishing**). Several of the disciples were experienced fishermen on this very lake, and they were frightened and feared **perishing** in this storm.

i. “Stirred up, likely, by the devil to drown Christ and his disciples.” (Trapp)

d. **But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow:** Jesus’ true humanity is shown by His sleep on the boat. He became weary, and sometimes caught a bit of sleep wherever He could.

i. Think of all the worries that might have kept Jesus awake. He could worry about the religious and political leaders who plotted against Him. He could worry about His family who thought He was crazy. He could worry about the overwhelming crowds with their overwhelming needs. He could worry about the disciples He chose. He could worry about the future, because He knew what His destiny was. With all these things to worry about, Jesus wasn’t worried. He slept in a rocking boat.

ii. “The Lord’s sleep was not only the sleep of weariness: it was also the rest of faith, for there is a rest of faith as well as

a watch of faith.” (Cole)

e. **And they awoke Him:** The wind didn’t wake Him, the arguing of the disciples didn’t wake Him, and water splashing over the boat didn’t wake Him. But at the cry of His disciples, He instantly awoke. Jesus is like the mother who sleeps through all kinds of racket, but at the slightest noise from her little baby, she instantly awakes.

f. **Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?** Notice the “**we**.” Their idea was, “Hey Jesus, You’re in trouble here too. Maybe You had better wake up, get a bucket and start bailing along with us, because **we are perishing!**”

i. “It was not a request to Him to do anything; but a protest against His apparent indifference.” (Morgan) ii. The disciples were afraid, but at the same time there were several experienced fishermen among them. They knew they were in jeopardy (Luk_8:23), but probably felt they knew what to do. They worked hard at bailing out the water, at rowing in a certain rhythm, at piloting the boat in a certain direction. They were annoyed that Jesus didn’t help them.

iii. We are often the same way. We feel we know the situation. We’re experts on this one, and all we want Jesus to do is help us bail out our boat. We want Jesus’ help, but we want His help to work out our plan. “I am afraid, too, that we rely too much upon ourselves. Was it not Dr. Gordon who, when he lay a-dying, said that the secret of strength in faith in Christ was having no faith in ourselves? I am inclined to think that the secret of weak faith in God is our having a good deal of self-reliance; but when you cannot trust to yourselves, then you hang upon Christ, and cling to him as your only hope; then you give the grip of a sinking man, and there is no hold like that.”

(Spurgeon)

iv. “There is great trouble in some minds about the church, for everything is going badly, all things are in commotion. The signs of the times are dark. To me the worst trouble is that Jesus seems to be asleep; there is nothing doing, no

great revival of religion, and but little power with the ministry. I am, however, comforted by the reflection that Jesus slops, but he never oversleeps. When we fall asleep we do not know how to awake, but Jesus Christ does - he sleeps, but he does not oversleep. Glory be to his name, he sleeps, but he is not dead: and as long as he is alive our joy is alive. While there is a living Christ there will always be a living church. There may be both a sleeping Christ and a sleeping church, but neither Christ nor his church can perish. If our Lord be asleep, he is asleep near the helm - he has only to put his hand cut and steer the vessel at once. He is asleep, but he only sleeps until we cry more loudly to him. When we get into such trouble that we cannot help ourselves, and feel our entire dependence on him, then he will reveal his power.” (Spurgeon)

g. **Then He arose and rebuked the wind:** Jesus didn't merely quiet the wind and the sea; He **rebuked the wind and the sea**. This, together with the disciples' fear and what Jesus will encounter at His destination, give the sense that Satan had a significant hand in this storm.

i. **Rebuked . . . “Peace, be still!”** The same terminology is used when Jesus rebuked and silenced demons. This was a spiritual battle as much as a weather crisis. “Jesus addressed the raging storm as a ‘force’ threatening him and his disciples. The force of the sea was muzzled as Jesus subdued it with his sovereign word of authority.”

(Lane)

ii. Gayle Erwin tells the story of a boat trip across the Sea of Galilee with a tour group when the wind, rain, and waves began to kick up. A young man on the boat thought “What Would Jesus Do?” and stood up to rebuke the storm. When he spoke out, “Peace, be still” the rain and wind kept coming but the engine of the boat immediately cut out.

iii. As well, Mark tells us **other little boats were also with Him**. When Jesus calmed the stormy Sea of Galilee, He

did not only rescue Himself and the disciples, but all the others in the **little boats**.

2. (Mar_4:40-41) Jesus rebukes His disciples.

But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How *is it* that you have no faith?” And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

a. **Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?** Jesus didn’t say, “Wow, what a storm!” Instead, He asked, “**Why is it that you have no faith?** ” The storm could not disturb Jesus, but the unbelief of His disciples disturbed Him.

i. It was not their *fear of the storm* that made Jesus say they had **no faith**. A small boat in a big storm is a scary place, and the initial fear itself isn’t wrong. What the disciples chose to *do* with the fear made all the difference.

ii. Jesus could say they had **no faith** because they did not believe His word. They each heard Jesus say, “*Let us go over to the other side of the lake*” (Mar_4:22). Jesus did not say, “Let’s do the best we can and maybe we’ll all drown.” He promised a safe arrival, and the disciples *could have* chosen to trust in that promise, but they didn’t. In this sense they had **no faith**.

iii. Jesus could say they had **no faith** because they accused Jesus of a lack of care towards them. When they woke Him, they said, “*Do you not care that we are perishing?* ” (Mar_4:38) When we think Jesus doesn’t care about us, it shows we have **no faith**, because we don’t believe the truth about Jesus. It takes great faith to trust the sleeping Jesus, to know that He cares and works for us even when it does not *seem* like it. But this is the kind of trust God wants to build in us.

iv. Jesus could say they had **no faith** because they forgot the big picture. The disciples should have known that God would not allow the Messiah to perish in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. Could the story of Jesus possibly end with

Him drowning in a boat accident on the Sea of Galilee? “Was it reasonable for these men to think that he, who could foresee the future, would take them on board a ship when he foreknew that a storm would wreck them?

Would so kind a leader have taken them to sea to drown them? Was it reasonable to think that he who was so favored of God would be left to perish? Would he have gone to sleep if they had really been in danger? Was it reasonable to believe that the King of Israel was about to be drowned, even he whom they knew to be the light of the world? Our unbelief, my brethren, seldom deserves to be reasoned with. Our fears are often intensely silly, and when we get over them, and ourselves look back upon them, we are full of shame that we should have been so foolish. Our Lord kindly censured their unbelief because it was unreasonable.” (Spurgeon)

v. We could put the emphasis: **How is it that *you* have no faith?** Of all people, Jesus’ own disciples should have had faith. Would Jesus put the same question to us? “After all I have done in you and for you, **how is it that *you* have no faith?** ”

b. **They feared exceedingly:** The total calm of the sea should have filled them with peace, but instead, they were just as afraid when He calmed the storm as when they were in the midst of it.

c. **Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!** The disciples ask a good question: **Who can this be?** It can only be the LORD, Jehovah, who only has this power and authority. *O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness surrounds You. You rule the raging of the sea; when waves rise, You still them.*

(Psa_89:8-9)

i. In the span of a few moments, the disciples saw both the complete humanity of Jesus and the fullness of His deity. They saw Jesus for who He is: truly man and truly God.

d. All this shows the abiding care Jesus has for His people. "There are many Christians today who seem to think the boat is going down! I am tired of the wailing of some of my friends who take that view. The boat cannot go down. Jesus is on board." (Morgan)

(Mar 4:2) He taught them many things in parables,² and in his teaching said to them:

(Mar 4:3) "Listen! A sower went out to sow.³

(Mar 4:4) And as he sowed, some seed⁴ fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

(Mar 4:5) Other seed fell on rocky ground⁵ where it did not have much soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep.⁶

(Mar 4:6) When the sun came up it was scorched, and because it did not have sufficient root,⁷ it withered.

(Mar 4:7) Other seed fell among the thorns,⁸ and they grew up and choked it,⁹ and it did not produce grain.

(Mar 4:8) But¹⁰ other seed fell on good soil and produced grain, sprouting and growing; some yielded thirty times as much, some sixty, and some a hundred times."

(Mar 4:9) And he said, "Whoever has ears to hear had better listen!"¹¹

(Mar 4:10) ***The Purpose of Parables***

When he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.

(Mar 4:11) He said to them, "The secret¹² of the kingdom of God has been given¹³ to you. But to those outside, everything is in parables, (Mar 4:12) so that ***although they look they may look but not see, and although they hear they may hear but not understand, so they may not repent and be forgiven.***"¹⁴

(Mar 4:13) He said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? Then¹⁵ how will you understand any parable?

(Mar 4:14) The sower sows the word.

(Mar 4:15) These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: Whenever they hear, immediately Satan¹⁶ comes and snatches the word¹⁷ that was sown in them.

(Mar 4:16) These are the ones sown on rocky ground: As soon as they hear the word, they receive it with joy.

(Mar 4:17) But¹⁸ they have no root in themselves and do not endure.¹⁹ Then, when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, immediately they fall away.

(Mar 4:18) Others are the ones sown among thorns: They are those who hear the word,

(Mar 4:19) but²⁰ worldly cares, the seductiveness of wealth,²¹ and the desire for other things come in and choke the word,²² and it produces nothing.

(Mar 4:20) But²³ these are the ones sown on good soil: They hear the word and receive it and bear fruit, one thirty times as much, one sixty, and one a hundred."

(Mar 4:21) ***The Parable of the Lamp***

He also said to them, "A lamp²⁴ isn't brought to be put under a basket²⁵ or under a bed, is it? Isn't it to be placed on a lampstand?

(Mar 4:22) For nothing is hidden except to be revealed,²⁶ and nothing concealed except to be brought to light.

(Mar 4:23) If anyone has ears to hear, he had better listen!"²⁷

(Mar 4:24) And he said to them, "Take care about what you hear. The measure you use will be the measure you receive,²⁸ and more will be added to you.

(Mar 4:25) For whoever has will be given more, but²⁹ whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."³⁰

(Mar 4:26) ***The Parable of the Growing Seed***

He also said, "The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground.

(Mar 4:27) He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.

(Mar 4:28) By itself the soil produces a crop, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

(Mar 4:29) And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle³¹ because the harvest has come."³²

(Mar 4:30) ***The Parable of the Mustard Seed***

He also asked, "To what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to present it?

(Mar 4:31) It is like a mustard seed³³ that when sown in the ground, even though it is the smallest of all the seeds in the ground — (Mar 4:32) when it is sown, it grows up,³⁴ becomes the greatest of all garden plants, and grows large branches so that the wild birds³⁵ can nest in its shade."³⁶

(Mar 4:33) ***The Use of Parables***

So³⁷ with many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear.

(Mar 4:34) He did not speak to them without a parable. But privately he explained everything to his own disciples.

(Mar 4:35) ***Stilling of a Storm***

On that day, when evening came, Jesus³⁸ said to his disciples, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake."³⁹

(Mar 4:36) So⁴⁰ after leaving the crowd, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat,⁴¹ and other boats were with him.

(Mar 4:37) Now⁴² a great windstorm⁴³ developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped.

(Mar 4:38) But⁴⁴ he was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?"

(Mar 4:39) So⁴⁵ he got up and rebuked⁴⁶ the wind, and said to the sea,⁴⁷ "Be quiet! Calm down!" Then⁴⁸ the wind stopped, and it was dead calm.

(Mar 4:40) And he said to them, "Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?"

(Mar 4:41) They were overwhelmed by fear and said to one another, "Who then is this?⁴⁹ Even the wind and sea obey him!"⁵⁰

(Mar 5:1) ***Healing of a Demoniac***

So¹ they came to the other side of the lake, to the region of the Gerasenes.²

(Guzik)

Mar 5:1-43

Mark 5 - JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS AUTHORITY

A. The authority of Jesus in the life of the Gadarene demoniac.

1. (Mar_5:1-8) The description of the demon possessed man. Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"

a. **Immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit:** This is the most detailed description of a demon possessed man we have in the Bible. It is the classic profile of demonic possession.

- The man had been demon possessed for a *long time* (Luk_8:27).

- The man wore no clothes and lived like a sub-human, wild animal (Luk_8:27).

- The man lived among the decaying and dead, contrary to Jewish law and human instinct (**dwelling among the tombs**).

- The man had supernatural strength (**chains pulled apart**).

- The man was tormented and self-destructive (**crying out and cutting himself with stones**).

- The man had uncontrollable behavior (**neither could anyone tame him**). Strangely, some Christians think that this is how the Holy Spirit works: by overwhelming the operations of the body, and making one do strange and grotesque things.

i. We can be sure that he did not start out this way. At one time this man lived among others in the village. But his own irrational, wild behavior convinced the villagers that he was demon possessed, or at least insane. They bound him with chains to keep him from hurting others, but he broke the chains time and again. Finally, they drove him out of town and he lived in the village cemetery, a madman among the tombs, hurting the only person he could - himself.

b. **Immediately there met Him:** When this man came to Jesus (Jesus did not seek out the man), Jesus said to demon possessing the man, **Come out of the man, unclean spirit!**

c. **Jesus, Son of the Most High God:** This is what the demons said *in response* to Jesus' command to **come out of**

the man (for He said to them, “Come out of the man”
). This was a way they tried to *resist* the work of Jesus.

i. In the background of all this is the ancient superstition that you had spiritual power over another if you knew or said their exact name. This is why the unclean spirits addressed Jesus with this full title: **Jesus, Son of the Most High God**. According to the superstitions of the day, this was like a round of artillery fired at Jesus.

ii. “The full address is not a confession of Jesus’ dignity but a desperate attempt to gain control over him or to render him harmless, in accordance with the common assumption of the period that the use of the precise name of an adversary gave one mastery over him.” (Lane)

iii. Therefore, in their address of Jesus they have the right theological facts, but they don’t have the right heart. The demons inhabiting him had a kind of “faith” in Jesus. They knew the true identity of Jesus better than the religious leaders did. But it was not a faith or a knowledge of Jesus that could save (Jam_2:19).

d. What have I to do with You . . . I implore You by God that You do not torment me: This is the unclean spirit speaking, not the man possessed. The demon did not want to leave his “host.”

i. Demonic possession is when a demonic spirit *resides* in a human body, and at times the demon will show its own personality through the personality of the host body.

ii. Demonic possession is a reality today, though we must guard against either *ignoring* demonic activity or *over-emphasizing* supposed demonic activity.

iii. We are not told specifically how a person becomes demon possessed, other than the inference that it must be by some sort of invitation, whether offered deliberately or not. Superstition, fortune telling, “harmless” occult games and practices, spiritism, New Age deception, magic, drug taking and other things open doors of deception, and present a real demonic danger.

iv. People often get involved in the occult or demonic things because there is something there that seems to work.

Unfortunately, it is not some *thing*, but some *one*.

e. **Do not torment me:** These demons considered it **torment** to be put out of this man's body. Why do demons want to inhabit human bodies? For the same reason why the vandal wants a spray can, or a violent man wants a gun. A human body is a weapon that they can use in their attack against God.

i. Demons also attack men because they hate the image of God in man, so they attack that image by debasing man and making him grotesque - just as they did to this man in the country of the Gadarenes.

ii. Demons have the same goal in Christians: to wreck the image of God. But their tactics are restricted toward Christians, because demonic spirits were "disarmed" by Jesus' work on the cross (Col_2:15). Demonic spirits certainly can both deceive and intimidate Christians, binding them with fear and unbelief.

2. (Mar_5:9-13) Jesus demonstrates His authority over evil spirits.

Then He asked him, "What *is* your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name *is* Legion; for we are many." Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

a. **What is your name?** Why did Jesus ask for a name? Probably so that *we* would know the full extent of the problem, knowing that the man was filled with many demons (**Legion**) not just one. A Roman legion usually consisted of 6,000

men. This does not mean that the man was inhabited with 6,000 demons, but that he had many.

i. From the account as a whole, we see that Jesus was *not* playing into the ancient superstition about knowing a demon's name. In fact, Jesus shows that it is unnecessary for Him to know the name of the demon. When they replied "**Legion**," they really weren't saying a name, but simply trying to intimidate Jesus with a large number.

Legion says, "There are a lot of us, we are organized, we are unified, we are ready to fight, and we are mighty."

ii. If it was important for Jesus to know their names, He could have demanded "name, rank, and serial number" for each of them one by one. But Jesus would not play into their superstitions. His power was greater than them.

iii. According to the superstitions of the day, the onlookers probably felt that the unclean spirits had the upper hand. They knew and declared a full name of Jesus. They evaded His request for their name. And finally, they hoped to frighten Jesus with their large number. But Jesus didn't buy into these ancient superstitions at all, and easily cast the unclean spirits out of the afflicted man.

iv. "The answer may be evasive, the demons desiring to withhold their true names from Jesus in a desperate attempt to thwart his power. It is also possible that the name may have been selected to invoke the fear of a powerful name." (Lane)

v. It's important to emphasize this, because it is easy for Christians to get caught up in superstitions about demons and the spiritual realm. Some people act like demonic trouble is spread like cooties. If that were true, think of all the things you come in contact with every day that *might* have been touched by a demon possessed person. The demonic trouble with objects is found in their *content*, not in the object itself. We must never be caught up in such foolish and counter-productive superstitions.

b. Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country: Luk_8:31 tells us that the

demons also *begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss*. They did not want to become “inactive.” “Lo, it is another hell to the devil to be idle, or otherwise than evil-occupied.” (Trapp) i. “Satan would rather vex swine than do no mischief at all. He is so fond of evil that he would work it upon animals if he cannot work it upon men.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Why did these demons want to say in that **country**? “That it was a paganish, ignorant, sottish place, where usually the devil hath the best markets and the greatest rule. For as it is said of Christ, that he could not do much in some places where he came because of their unbelief; so neither can the devil do much in some places, because of the faith of the gospel received by them. Hence it is observable, that as the devil is not able to play his game in any place amongst Christians, as he doth this day amongst heathens; so he hath much less power at this day in places where the word of God is more generally known, and more faithfully preached, than in other places where people are more ignorant of the Scriptures, and have less faithful and frequent preaching.” (Poole)

iii. In Mar_5:7, the demons demonstrated that they knew who Jesus was. Here they demonstrate that they can “pray” to Jesus (**begged Him earnestly**). This shows that you can know who Jesus is and not surrender to Him.

You can pray to Him and not surrender to Him.

c. Send us to the swine, that we may enter them: Why did the demons *want* to enter the **swine**? Because demons are bent on destruction, and *hate to be idle*. “The devil is so fond of doing mischief, that he will rather play at a small game than stand out.” (Poole) i. Notice that the demons can’t even afflict *pigs* without the permission of God. “Since a demon cannot enter even into a *swine* without being *sent* by God himself, how little is the *power* or *malice* of them to

be dreaded by those who have God for their portion and protector!” (Clarke) d. **And at once Jesus gave them permission:** Why did Jesus *allow* this? Why didn’t Jesus just put these unclean spirits out of commission? Because the time of the total demonstration of His authority over demons had not yet come - it would come at the cross. Col_2:15 tells us that at the cross Jesus disarmed demons in their attacks on believers, He made a public spectacle of their defeat, and He triumphed over them in His work on the cross.

e. **The herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea:** The destructive nature of demonic spirits is shown by their effect on the swine. They are like their leader, Satan whose desire is to *steal, and to kill, and to destroy*. (Joh_10:10) i. This helps explain *why* Jesus allowed the demons to enter the pigs - because He wanted everyone to know what the real intention of these demons was. They wanted to destroy the man just as they destroyed the pigs. Because men are made in the image of God, they could not have their way as easily with the man, but their intention was just the same: to completely destroy him.

ii. “Jesus allowed the demons to enter the swine to indicate beyond question that their real purpose was the total destruction of their host.” (Lane)

iii. Wasn’t this unfair to the owner of the pigs? “‘But the owners of the swine lost their property.’ Yes, and learn from this how small value temporal riches are in the estimation of God. He suffers them to be lost, sometimes to disengage us from them through *mercy*; sometimes out of *justice*, to punish us for having *acquired* or *preserved* them either by *covetousness* or *injustice*.” (Clarke) 3. (Mar_5:14-17) The reaction of the bystanders to the deliverance of the demon possessed man.

So those who fed the swine fled, and they told *it* in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the

one *who had been* demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him *who had been* demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.

a. **And they were afraid:** They were more afraid of a free man than a possessed man. When they saw the man **in his right mind**, sitting at the feet of Jesus, **they were afraid**.

i. Part of their fear was found in the fact that their superstitions had been shattered, and they didn't know what to make of it all. According to their superstitions, the demons should have had the upper hand over Jesus - but they didn't at all. They had a hard time accepting this.

b. **Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region:** They didn't seem to mind having this demon possessed, tormented man in their midst, but they did mind having Jesus around - so they asked Him to leave - *and He did!*

i. When people are more afraid of what Jesus will do in their lives than what Satan does in at the moment, they often push Jesus away - and He may leave if you ask Him to.

4. (Mar_5:18-20) The reaction of the man who had been delivered from demons.

And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

a. **He who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him:** The man who had been set free by Jesus just wanted to be with Jesus. This man didn't only want what Jesus could do for him. The true change in his heart was shown by that he wanted to be with Jesus.

i. **He who had been demon possessed:** “That is a striking name for a man, ‘he that had been possessed with the devil.’ It would stick to him as long as he lived, and it would be a standing sermon wherever he went. He would be asked to tell the story of what he used to be, and how the change came about. What a story for any man to tell!”

(Spurgeon)

b. **Jesus did not permit him:** Why wouldn’t Jesus let this man follow Him and be with Him? Because Jesus knew that he had a more important ministry with his own family and community.

i. Sometimes we have a hard time understanding the ways of God. The people of the city made an evil request: *they began to plead with Him to depart from their region*, and Jesus answered their prayer. The man **who had been demon possessed** made a godly request: **that he might be with Him**, and Jesus said “no” to that prayer.

ii. Of course, this was because this man could be a light among the people of these Gentiles cities in a way that Jesus and the disciples could not. But it was also to cure the man of any superstitions. He might have thought that he had to stay close to Jesus so the demons would not come back. “Perhaps, too, his prayer was not answered, lest his fear should have been thereby sanctioned. If he did fear, and I feel morally certain that he did, that the devils would return, then, of course, he longed to be with Christ. But Christ take that fear from him, and as good as says to him, ‘You do not need to be near me; I have so healed that you will never be sick again.’” (Spurgeon)

c. This man had a great message to tell: **what great things Jesus had done for him**. This is a gospel we should all be able to preach. The man set free did, because **he departed and began to proclaim . . . all that Jesus had done for him**. His story showed the value of *one life* to Jesus, because this was the only reason why Jesus came to this side of the Sea of Galilee. His story also showed that with Jesus, *no one*

is beyond hope, because if this man could be changed than anyone can.

i. **Began to proclaim in Decapolis:** “The Decapolis was ten Greek cities on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee, including Damascus. It was to this gentile community that Jesus commanded this man to go and bear witness.”

(Stedman)

ii. “Decapolis literally means The Ten Cities. Near to the Jordan and on its east side, there were ten cities mainly of rather a special character. They were essentially Greek. Their names were Scythopolis, which was the only one on the west side of the Jordan, Pella, Dion, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Gadara, Raphana, Kanatha, Hippos and Damascus.”

(Barclay) The spectacular remains of Scythopolis can be seen today.

iii. “He was told to publish what great things *the Lord* had done for him. He went and published what great things *Jesus* had done for him. Did he make any mistake? Oh, no! It is but another name for the same Person: for Jesus is the Lord; and when you speak of him as divine, and talk of him in terms fit only for God, you do but speak rightly; for so he deserveth to be praised.” (Spurgeon)

B. Jesus demonstrates His authority over sickness and death.

1. (Mar_5:21-24) A father asks Jesus to heal his daughter.

Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.” So *Jesus* went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

a. **A great multitude gathered to Him:** Jesus has left the Gentile region around the Sea of Galilee, where He met the man possessed by many demons. Now He returns to the

Jewish towns on **the other side**, and the large crowds immediately come to Jesus again.

b. **One of the rulers of the synagogue came:** The *ruler of the synagogue* was somewhat like a modern day “pastor.” He managed both the spiritual and the business affairs of the synagogue. This man came in desperation to Jesus (**fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly**), because his daughter was **at the point of death**.

i. “As synagogue-ruler he was a lay official responsible for supervision of the building and arranging the service.”

(Lane)

c. **Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live:** This man had great confidence in Jesus. He believed that Jesus had all power to heal his daughter. But he also believed that Jesus should be there for it to happen (**come and lay Your hands on her**).

i. It may be that the man held a firm superstition in his mind, believing that the healer had to be present. It may be that he was just accustomed to thinking that way, and never really thought about a person being healed in a different way. Whatever the reason, by the way he thought, this man put Jesus in a box. “To heal my daughter You have to **come and lay Your hands on her**.”

ii. When a Roman Centurion came to Jesus in a similar situation (Luk_7:1-10), Jesus didn’t even go to the centurion’s house to heal the servant. He simply pronounced him healed from a distance. But here, Jesus did not demand that Jarius show the same faith the centurion had. Jesus responded to the faith Jarius had, and He asks us to give to Him the faith that we have.

iii. “This was weakness of faith, far short of that of the centurion, who yet was a Roman soldier; whereas Jarius was a learned Jew. Knowledge is therefore one thing, faith another; and the greatest scholars are not always the holiest men.” (Trapp)

d. Adam Clarke notices four things displayed by Jarius that are necessary for answered prayer.

i. We must put ourselves in the presence of Jesus (**one of the rulers of the synagogue came**).

ii. We must humble ourselves sincerely before Jesus (**he fell at His feet**).

iii. We must lay open our request with a holy earnestness (**and begged Him earnestly**).

iv. We must have total confidence in the power and the goodness of Jesus (**Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live**).

2. (Mar_5:25-34) A woman is healed of a hemorrhage.

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

a. **A flow of blood for twelve years:** This woman was in a desperate condition. Her condition made her ceremonially and socially unclean, and this would be quite a burden to live under for 12 years.

i. According to the Jewish ideas of the time, if this woman touched anyone, she made them ceremonially unclean, an

uncleanness that would not allow them to take part in any aspect of Israel's worship (Lev_15:19-31).

ii. "By the very law of her people, she was divorced from her husband, and could not live in her home; she was ostracized from all society, and must not come into contact with her old friends; she was excommunicated from the services of the synagogue, and thus shut out from the women's courts in the temple."

b. Had suffered many things from many physicians:

She went to the doctors to get better, but only **suffered** worse - and became poorer. Luke the physician also tells us that she had *spent all her livelihood on physicians* (Luk_8:43). He knew how doctor bills could take all that you had.

i. The ancient rabbis had many different formulas to help a woman afflicted like this. "Rabbi Jochanan says: ' *Take of gum Alexandria, of alum, and of corcus hortensis, the weight of a zuzee each; let them be bruised together, and given in wine to the woman that hath an issue of blood. But if this fail, Take of Persian onions nine logs, boil them in wine, and give it to her to drink: and say, Arise from thy flux. But should this fail, Set her in a place where two ways meet, and let her hold a cup of wine in her hand; and let somebody come behind and affright her, and say, Arise from thy flux. But should this do no good . . .*'" (Clarke)

ii. When a soul is sick today, they often go to different "doctors" and spend a great deal of time and money, only to **suffer many things from many physicians**. A sick soul may go to "Doctor Entertainment," but finds no cure.

They may pay a visit to "Doctor Success" but he is no help in the long run. "Doctor Pleasure," "Doctor Self-Help," or "Doctor Religion" can't bring a real cure. Only "Doctor Jesus" can.

c. If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well: Because this woman's condition was embarrassing, and because she was ceremonially unclean and would be

condemned for touching Jesus or even being in a pressing crowd, she wanted to do this secretly. She would not openly ask Jesus to be healed, but she thought **“If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”**

i. Was this woman correct in thinking she could be healed by touching the border of Jesus’ garment? We have no evidence in the Bible that Jesus healed this way before. Isn’t she just being superstitious, and how can God honor that?

ii. Because even though her faith had elements of err and superstition, she believed in the healing power of Jesus, and the border of His garment served as a point of contact for that faith. There are many things that we could find wrong with this woman’s faith. But more than anything, her faith was in *Jesus*, and the object of faith is much more important than the quality of faith.

iii. “There was no magic in the garments of Jesus. Perhaps there was superstition in the woman’s mind, but Jesus honoured her darkened faith as in the case of Peter’s shadow and Paul’s handkerchief.” (Robertson)

iv. Mat_9:20 says she touched the *hem of His garment*, and that actually means one of the borders of the outer garment that all Jews wore. “Every devout Jew wore an outer robe with four tassels on it, one at each corner. These tassels were worn in obedience to the command in Num_15:38-40, and they were to signify to others, and to remind the man himself, that the wearer was a member of the chosen people of God.” (Barclay)

d. **Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up:** According to the thinking of the day, when this unclean woman touched Jesus, it would make *Him* unclean. But because of the nature of Jesus and the power of God, that isn’t how it worked. When she touched His garment Jesus wasn’t made unclean, the woman was made whole. When we come to Jesus with our sin and lay it upon Him it doesn’t make Him a sinner, but it makes us clean.

e. **She felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction . . . immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him:** When the woman was healed, *both* the woman and Jesus knew it happened. She **felt in her body** that it happened, and Jesus felt **power had gone out of Him**.

i. It would be interesting to know what exactly **power had gone out of Him** means. This is the only healing or miracle in the ministry of Jesus - or anyone else - that mentions this idea. From every other healing in the ministry of Jesus, we don't get the idea that God's healing power was communicated by a noticeable surge of power flowing through Jesus and into someone else. But on this occasion, *something* like that happened, even if we don't know how.

f. **Who touched My clothes?** Roberston says that Jesus more literally said, "Who touched me on my clothes." Her goal wasn't to touch the *clothes* of Jesus, but to touch Jesus. The clothes just happened to be the part of Jesus she could touch.

i. Because this woman was embarrassed, and thought her uncleanness meant no one would let her touch Jesus, she tried to do it secretly. But God often brings His work out into the open, even if it may start secretly.

g. **And He looked around to see her who had done this thing:** This was *before* she revealed herself. Jesus knew all along exactly who touched Him and received the healing. He asked, "**Who touched My clothes?** " for the benefit of the *woman*, not because He didn't know who the person was.

i. The disciples were amazed that Jesus could ask this question. Given the situation, **His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"** But the disciples didn't understand the difference between *casual contact* with Jesus, and *reaching out to touch Him in faith*.

ii. We can imagine someone who because of the press of the crowd bumped up against Jesus. When the woman's miracle

was revealed, they might say, “I bumped into Jesus, I touched Him - yet I was not healed.” But there is a huge difference between bumping into Jesus here and there and reaching out to touch Him in faith. You can come to church week after week and “bump into” Jesus. That isn’t the same as reaching out to touch Him in faith.

iii. “It is not every contact with Christ that saves men; it is the arousing of yourself to come near to him, the determinate, the personal, resolute, believing touch of Jesus Christ which saves.” (Spurgeon)

iv. “Augustine long ago said of this story, ‘Flesh presses, faith touches.’ . . . He can always distinguish between the jostle of a curious mob, and the agonized touch of a needy soul.” (Morgan)

h. **But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth:** Why did Jesus make her go through this? He knew who she was, and she knew who she was, so it might seem that His only purpose was to *embarrass* this poor woman before others. But that wasn’t the purpose at all.

i. Jesus did it so that *she* would know she was healed. It is true that Mark tells us **she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction**, but this woman was like any other person. Soon she would begin to doubt and fear that she really was healed. She would wonder when the ailment would return. But Jesus told her **“Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”** Jesus “called her out” so *she* would absolutely know that she was healed.

ii. Jesus did it so *others* would know she was healed. This woman had an ailment that no one could see and that made her a public outcast. It would sound suspicious to many if she just announced that she was healed. They would think that she made it up just to be considered “clean” again. Jesus “called her out” so *others* would absolutely know that she was healed.

iii. Jesus did it so that she would know *why* she was healed. When Jesus said, “**Daughter, your faith has made you well**” it showed the woman that it really wasn’t touching the clothing of Jesus that healed her. Instead, it was her **faith** in Jesus and what He could do for her.

iv. Jesus did it because He didn’t want her to think that she *stole* a blessing, that she could never look Jesus in the eye again. She didn’t steal anything, she received it by faith and Jesus wanted her to know that.

v. Jesus did it so *Jarius* could see this woman’s faith and be encouraged regarding his daughter. Jesus “called her out” to *encourage someone else* in faith.

vi. Jesus did it because He wanted to bless her in a special way. He called her “**Daughter.**” Jesus never called any other person by this name. Jesus wanted her to come forth and hear this special name of tenderness. When Jesus calls us forward, it is because He has something special to give us.

vii. “It seemed cruel, but it was really kind. It sent her home with loftier thoughts of Him. She would never talk of the wonder of the tassel; she would always talk of the wonder of the Lord. Permitted to walk away without confession, she would have said exultantly, ‘I’ve found a cure.’ *Now* the woman cried, ‘I’ve found a friend.’”

(Morrisson)

viii. Jesus may ask us to do things that seem embarrassing today. He doesn’t ask us to do them just because He wants to embarrass us. There is also a higher purpose even if we can’t see it. But if avoiding embarrassment is the most important thing in our life, then pride is our god. We are more in love with ourselves and with our self-image than we are in love with Jesus.

i. **Came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth:** When we come to Jesus, we must tell Him **the whole truth**.

i. We must tell Him **the whole truth** about our *sin*. We come to Him as the Great Physician and He asks, “What

seems to be the problem?" So don't leave anything out.

ii. We must tell Him **the whole truth** about all our *suffering*. He wants to know where it hurts, so tell Him.

iii. We must tell Him **the whole truth** about the *other doctors and cures* we tried.

iv. We must tell Him **the whole truth** about all our *hopes*, because He wants to know what He can do for us.

j. Later Christians couldn't help but embellish this account. Some said the woman's name was Berenice, others said it was Veronica. One said outside her door she set up a statute of her bowing down before Jesus, and at the foot of the statue a strange plant grew that could miraculously heal diseases.

k. Poor Jarius! During all this, his daughter sits ill at home, her life slipping away. It must have tortured him to see Jesus take time out to minister to this woman while his daughter suffered. God is never slow, but He often *seems* slow to the sufferer.

3. (Mar_5:35-36) Jesus calls Jarius to an extreme faith with an extreme promise.

While He was still speaking, *some* came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house* who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."

a. **Your daughter is dead:** How Jarius' heart sank when he heard this. He must have thought, "I knew this was taking too long. I knew Jesus shouldn't have wasted His time on this silly woman. Now the situation is beyond repair."

b. **Do not be afraid; only believe:** Jesus tells Jarius to do two things. First, he must stop being **afraid**. It sounds almost cruel for Jesus to say this to a man who just lost his daughter, but Jesus knew that *fear* and *faith* don't go together.

Before Jarius could really trust Jesus, he had to *decide* to put away fear. Second, Jesus told Jarius to **only believe**. Don't

try to **believe** and be afraid at the same time. Don't try to **believe** and figure it all out. Don't try to **believe** and make sense of the delay. Instead, **only believe**.

i. What was it that Jarius was supposed to **believe**? The only thing he had to **believe** was the word of Jesus.

Everything else told him the situation was hopeless, but the word of Jesus brought hope.

4. (Mar_5:37-43) Jesus raises Jarius' daughter from the dead. And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years *of age*. And they were overcome with great amazement. But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that *something* should be given her to eat.

a. **He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John:** Often these three are considered the "inner circle" of Jesus' disciples. Couldn't it be just as true that Jesus knew He had to keep a special eye on these three?

b. **The child is not dead, but sleeping:** Jesus wasn't out of touch with reality when He said this. He wasn't playing "make-believe." He said this because He knew a higher reality, a spiritual reality that was more certain and powerful than death itself.

c. **A tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly:** In that day it was customary to hire professional mourners to add to the atmosphere of grief and pain at a death. But the

professional mourners could only grieve superficially. Notice how quickly they turn from weeping to ridicule (**they ridiculed Him**).

i. **They ridiculed Him:** “Note imperfect tense. They kept it up.” (Robertson)

ii. “Since even the poorest man was required by common custom to hire a minimum of two fluteplayers and one professional mourner in the event of his wife’s death, it is probable that one who held the rank of synagogue-ruler would be expected to hire a large number of professional mourners.” (Lane)

d. **When He had put them all outside:** Jesus would have nothing to do with these people who don’t believe His promises. He drove them out so that they would not discourage the faith of Jarius.

e. **Little girl, I say to you, arise:** What good is it to talk to a dead person? Because Jesus is God, He can speak to the girl as if she were alive. Rom_4:17 says that God *gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did*. Jesus spoke to this girl with the power of God, and she was raised from the dead.

f. **They were overcome with great amazement:** Jesus didn’t fail Jarius, and He didn’t fail the woman who needed healing. But in ministering to both, He needed to stretch the faith of Jarius extra far.

g. In all this we see how the work of Jesus is different, yet the same among each individual. If Jesus can touch each need this personally, He can touch our needs the same way.

i. Jarius had twelve years of sunshine that were about to be extinguished. The woman had twelve years of agony that seemed hopeless to heal.

ii. Jarius was an important man, the ruler of the synagogue. The woman was a nobody. We don’t even know her name.

iii. Jarius was probably wealthy, because he was an important man. The woman was poor because she spent all her money on doctors.

iv. Jarius came publicly. The woman came secretly.
v. Jarius thought Jesus had to do a lot to heal his daughter. The woman thought all she needed was to touch Jesus' garment.

vi. Jesus responded to the woman immediately. Jesus responded to Jarius after a delay.

vii. Jarius' daughter was healed secretly. The woman was healed publicly.

(Mar 5:2) Just as Jesus³ was getting out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit⁴ came from the tombs and met him.⁵

(Mar 5:3) He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

(Mar 5:4) For his hands and feet had often been bound with chains and shackles,⁶ but⁷ he had torn the chains apart and broken the shackles in pieces. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

(Mar 5:5) Each night and every day among the tombs and in the mountains, he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

(Mar 5:6) When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him.

(Mar 5:7) Then⁸ he cried out with a loud voice, "Leave me alone,⁹ Jesus, Son of the Most High God! I implore you by God¹⁰ — do not torment me!"

(Mar 5:8) (For Jesus¹¹ had said to him, "Come out of that man, you unclean spirit!")¹²

(Mar 5:9) Jesus¹³ asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "My name is Legion,¹⁴ for we are many."

(Mar 5:10) He begged Jesus¹⁵ repeatedly not to send them out of the region.

(Mar 5:11) There on the hillside,¹⁶ a great herd of pigs was feeding.

(Mar 5:12) And the demonic spirits¹⁷ begged him, "Send us into the pigs. Let us enter them."

(Mar 5:13) Jesus¹⁸ gave them permission.¹⁹ So²⁰ the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs. Then the

herd rushed down the steep slope into the lake, and about two thousand were drowned in the lake.

(Mar 5:14) Now²¹ the herdsmen ran off and spread the news in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

(Mar 5:15) They came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man sitting there, clothed and in his right mind — the one who had the "Legion" — and they were afraid.

(Mar 5:16) Those who had seen what had happened to the demon-possessed man reported it, and they also told about the pigs.

(Mar 5:17) Then²² they asked Jesus²³ to leave their region.

(Mar 5:18) As he was getting into the boat the man who had been demon-possessed asked if he could go²⁴ with him.

(Mar 5:19) But²⁵ Jesus²⁶ did not permit him to do so. Instead, he said to him, "Go to your home and to your people and tell them what the Lord has done for you,²⁷ that he had mercy on you."

(Mar 5:20) So²⁸ he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis²⁹ what Jesus had done for him,³⁰ and all were amazed.

(Mar 5:21) ***Restoration and Healing***

When Jesus had crossed again in a boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he was by the sea.

(Mar 5:22) Then³¹ one of the synagogue rulers,³² named Jairus,³³ came up, and when he saw Jesus,³⁴ he fell at his feet.

(Mar 5:23) He asked him urgently, "My little daughter is near death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be healed and live."

(Mar 5:24) Jesus³⁵ went with him, and a large crowd followed and pressed around him.

(Mar 5:25) Now³⁶ a woman was there who had been suffering from a hemorrhage³⁷ for twelve years.³⁸

(Mar 5:26) She had endured a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet instead of getting better, she grew worse.

(Mar 5:27) When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,³⁹

(Mar 5:28) for she kept saying,⁴⁰ "If only I touch his clothes, I will be healed."⁴¹

(Mar 5:29) At once the bleeding stopped,⁴² and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

(Mar 5:30) Jesus knew at once that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

(Mar 5:31) His disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing against you and you say, 'Who touched me?' "

(Mar 5:32) But⁴³ he looked around to see who had done it.

(Mar 5:33) Then the woman, with fear and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

(Mar 5:34) He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well.⁴⁴ Go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

(Mar 5:35) While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue ruler's⁴⁵ house saying, "Your daughter has died. Why trouble the teacher any longer?"

(Mar 5:36) But Jesus, paying no attention to what was said, told the synagogue ruler, "Do not be afraid; just believe."

(Mar 5:37) He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James,⁴⁶ and John, the brother of James.

(Mar 5:38) They came to the house of the synagogue ruler where⁴⁷ he saw noisy confusion and people weeping and wailing loudly.⁴⁸

(Mar 5:39) When he entered he said to them, "Why are you distressed and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

(Mar 5:40) And they began making fun of him.⁴⁹ But he put them all outside⁵⁰ and he took the child's father and mother and his own companions⁵¹ and went into the room where the child was.⁵²

(Mar 5:41) Then, gently taking the child by the hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up."

(Mar 5:42) The girl got up at once and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). They were completely astonished at this.⁵³

(Mar 5:43) He strictly ordered that no one should know about this,⁵⁴ and told them to give her something to eat.

(Mar 6:1) ***Rejection at Nazareth***

Now¹ Jesus left that place and came to his hometown,² and his disciples followed him.

(Guzik)

Mar 6:1-56

Mark 6 - REJECTION, OPINIONS AND MIRACLES

A. Rejection in Jesus' home town.

1. (Mar_6:1-3) Jesus' countrymen are offended at Him.

Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, "Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him.

a. **Where did this Man get these things?** In His hometown, Jesus faced a crowd that wondered how He became so powerful in both word and works. Jesus left Nazareth as a former carpenter. He came back as a rabbi, complete with a group of disciples. It isn't hard to see how the Nazareth locals would wonder "What happened to Jesus?"

b. **Is this not the carpenter:** This was not a compliment. It was a way of pointing out that Jesus had no formal

theological training. He was never a formal disciple of a rabbi, much less a prominent rabbi.

i. Through the centuries, some people have thought that Jesus' employment as a **carpenter** somehow discredited His message. In ancient Rome, there was a terrible persecution under the Emperor Julian. At that time, a philosopher mocked a Christian, asking him "What do you think the carpenter's son is doing now?" The Christian wisely answered, "He's building a coffin for Julian."

c. The word **carpenter** is actually much broader than just one who works with wood. It has the idea of "a builder." Jesus may have worked with stone as much as with wood, because stone was a much more common building material in that time and place.

i. "Justin Martyr, an ancient writer, testifieth, that our Saviour, ere he entered upon the ministry, made ploughs, yokes." (Trapp)

ii. It's wonderful to think that our Lord - of all the professions He could have been - chose to be a *carpenter*. God is a builder, and He knows how to build in our lives - and He knows how to finish the job.

iii. A few things Jesus learned as a carpenter:

- He learned that there is a lot of potential in a log.
- He learned it takes work and time to make something useable.
- He learned that the finest things are made from the hardest wood.

d. **The Son of Mary:** This also was not a compliment. "The additional phrase 'the son of Mary' is probably disparaging. It was contrary to Jewish usage to describe a man as the son of his mother, even when she was a widow, except in insulting terms. Rumors to the effect that Jesus was illegitimate appear to have circulated in his own lifetime and may lie behind this reference as well." (Lane)

i. "How much of suspicion and contempt may have lurked behind that particular description of Him?" (Morgan) ii. The

lack of mention of Joseph perhaps implies that he died when Jesus was young; Jesus probably stayed at home to support His family until the youngest children were old enough to support the family.

e. **His sisters:** We knew that Jesus had brothers (Mar_3:31), but now we also learn that He had **sisters**. Mary did not remain a virgin after she gave birth to Jesus.

f. **And they were offended at Him:** These neighbors of Jesus are “too familiar” with Jesus. They know *little enough* about Him to think that they know *everything* about Him.

i. “Familiarity breeds contempt, only with contemptible things or among contemptible people.” (Philips Brooks) The contempt these people show says more about them than it does about Jesus.

2. (Mar_6:4-6) Jesus’ reaction to the rejection by His own countrymen.

But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

a. **A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country:** Jesus accepts His rejection as part of the price, though it must have hurt Him badly to be rejected by friends and neighbors.

b. **He could do no mighty work:** In this climate of unbelief. In this sense, Jesus’ power was limited by the unbelief of His countrymen.

i. This was in respect to God’s principle of partnership with man. God may work with *no* belief, but not with *un* belief.

ii. Jesus also knew that He could not “wow” them into believing with miracles. Jesus refused to do miracles in order to gain acceptance; He was willing to be rejected of men.

c. **He marveled because of their unbelief:** Jesus was amazed at their unbelief; our inability to believe God and

trust Him is indeed amazing!

i. Jesus only **marveled** at Jewish unbelief and Gentile faith (Luk_7:9). Would Jesus marvel at your faith or your unbelief? “Unbelief must needs be a monstrous sin, that puts Christ to the marvel.” (Trapp)

ii. We never read that Jesus marveled at art or architecture or even the wonders of creation. He never marveled at human ingenuity or invention. He didn’t marvel at the piety of the Jewish people or the military dominance of the Roman Empire. But Jesus did marvel at faith - when it was present in an unexpected place, and when it was absent where it should have been.

d. **He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching:** Jesus did not let this rejection by His countrymen debilitate Him. Jesus got on with the business of teaching and ministry. 3. (Mar_6:7-13) The twelve are sent out preaching.

And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff; no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts; but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.

a. **And began to send them out two by two:** In the gospel of John, Jesus said *As the Father has sent Me, I also send you* (Joh_20:21). Here, Jesus is sending out His disciples to do the same things that Jesus did: preaching, healing the sick, and freeing people from demonic possession.

b. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey: The disciples didn't need fancy equipment to preach a simple message. Too much stuff would get in the way of their urgent message.

i. There was a rule from the Jewish rabbis that you could not enter the temple area with a staff, shoes, or a moneybag, because you wanted to avoid even the appearance of being engaged in any other business than the service of the Lord. The disciples are engaged in such holy work (preaching the gospel and bringing God's healing) that they can't give the impression that they have any other motive.

c. No bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts: As well, travelling light kept them dependent upon God. They had to trust the Lord for everything if they didn't take much with them. If the preacher doesn't trust God, how can he tell others to trust Him?

i. "The forbidden *bag* may be the kind frequently used by itinerant philosophers and religious mendicants for begging." (Liefeld)

d. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them: Their job as preachers wasn't to change people's minds. They were to persuasively present the message; but if their audience didn't receive it, they didn't receive it - and they could leave, and **shake the very dust from your feet** as they left.

i. In that day, if Jewish people had to go in or through a Gentile city, as they left they would shake the dust off their feet. It was a gesture that said, "we don't want to take anything from this Gentile city with us." Essentially, Jesus is telling them to regard a Jewish city that rejects their message as if it were a Gentile city.

e. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gommorah in the day of judgment: The implication is that some will be judged more severely than others **in the day of**

judgment. Of course, none will have it good in hell; but perhaps some will have it worse than others will.

f. **So they departed:** They actually did it! We can hear Jesus' word to us all day long, but something is missing until we *do* it.

g. **They went out and preached:** What does it mean to *preach*? It simply means to *proclaim*, to tell others in the sense of announcing news to them. Some of the best, most effective preaching never happens inside a church. It happens when followers of Jesus are one-on-one with others, telling about what Jesus has done.

i. Morgan on **preached that people should repent:** "First they preached that men should repent. That is a declaration that needs careful consideration. It does not mean that they told men to repent, but that they preached in such a way as to produce repentance."

ii. "When the apostles went out to preach to men, they did not *create* a message; they *brought* a message."
(Barclay)

h. **And anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them:** The other reference to anointing with oil for healing is in Jam_5:14-15. We know that anointing with oil was a picture of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but it may also have had a medicinal purpose in that day.

i. "It is possible that the use of oil (olive oil) as a medicine is the basis of the practice . . . It was the best medicine of the ancients and was used internally and externally . . . The very word *aleipho* can be translated rub or anoint without any ceremony." (Robertson)

ii. "Galen, the great Greek doctor, said, 'Oil is the best of all instruments for healing diseased bodies.'" (Barclay) B. The death of John the Baptist.

1. (Mar_6:14-16) Herod hears of Jesus' ministry and is perplexed.

Now King Herod heard *of Him*, for His name had become well known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead,

and therefore these powers are at work in him.” Others said, “It is Elijah.” And others said, “It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.” But when Herod heard, he said, “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!”

a. **King Herod**: Actually, Emperor Augustus denied the title “king” to Herod. Goaded by the ambitious Herodias, Herod pressed for the title again and again until he so offended the emperor’s court that he was dismissed as a traitor. Mark uses the title **King Herod** either because it was the *local* custom to call him “king,” or more likely, he used it *ironically*. All his ancient readers would remember the character of this “Want-to-be **King Herod**.”

b. **It is Elijah**: Some people thought Jesus was **Elijah**, because it was prophesied Elijah would come before the Messiah (Mal_4:5). Others thought He was **the Prophet** Moses said would come after him (Deu_18:15).

c. But Herod believed that Jesus was **John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead**. Herod’s confusion comes from his own guilty conscience. It is hard to see clearly who Jesus is when we are in sin and rebellion.

2. (Mar_6:17-29) The sordid death of John the Baptist.

For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. For John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he *was* a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, “Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you.” He also swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.” So she went out

and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!" Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

a. **Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison:** Herod imprisoned John for his bold rebuke of his sin. At the same time, Herod did not want to kill John out of fear of the multitudes - and because he knew that John was a **just and holy man**.

i. "More weak than cruel, Herod listened to John with an undeniable fascination. John's word left him perplexed, and in anguish. Yet he found a strange pleasure in the authoritative preaching of this holy man, whose stringent life gave added power to his probing word. Too weak to follow John's counsel, he nevertheless had to listen." (Lane)

b. **For John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."** When he preached repentance, John did not spare the rich and powerful. He called Herod and his wife Herodias to repent, because Herodias had been the wife of Herod's brother Philip.

i. John Trapp tells of another bold confrontation of sin in a king: "So Latimer presented for a new-year's gift to King Henry VIII a New Testament, with a napkin, having this posy about it, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

c. **And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him:** Herodias' daughter shamelessly dances before Herod and friends, winning favor and a special request.

i. “With immodest gesticulations and trippings on the toe, wherewith the old fornicator was so inflamed, that he swore she should have anything of him.” (Trapp)

ii. “Such dancing was an almost unprecedented thing for women of rank, or even respectability. It was mimetic and licentious, and performed by professionals.” (Robertson)

d. **So she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist!”** The immediate reply of Herodias shows that the mother had this planned out all along. She knew her husband and she knew the situation, and knew she could get what she wanted this way.

i. “The girl’s question implies by the middle voice that she is thinking of something for herself. She was no doubt unprepared for her mother’s ghastly reply.” (Robertson)

ii. It is always sobering to see the lengths some will go to ease their guilt. Herodias hoped that murdering the prophet John would ease her guilt. She couldn’t have been more wrong, because it just added to her guilt.

e. **And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her:** Because Herod was afraid to cross his wife or lose face before his friends, he did something he knew to be wrong.

i. “The depth of distress experienced by Herod at Salome’s request for the head of John the Baptist is expressed graphically by the Greek word *perilypos*, ‘greatly distressed’. This is the same word used to describe Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane (Mar_14:34).” (Wessell)

ii. But in the end, sorry as he was, he did just what his wicked wife wanted. “And he had her not only for his wife, but for his mistress; for she ruled him at her pleasure, as Jezebel did Ahab . . . But it never goes well when the hen crows. How many have we known, whose heads have been broken with their own rib?” (Trapp)

iii. “Neither was it long ere this tyrant Herod had his payment from heaven.” (Trapp) In order to take his brother’s wife Herodias, Herod put away his first wife, a princess from a neighboring kingdom to the east. Her father was offended, and came against Herod with an army, and defeated him in battle. Then his brother Agrippa accused him of treason against Rome, and he was banished into the distant Roman province of Gaul, where Herod and Herodias committed suicide.

C. Jesus displays His power over the laws of nature.

1. (Mar_6:30-34) Jesus’ compassion on the multitude.

Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.

a. **Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while:** The disciples came back from a successful time of ministry, being sent by Jesus into the towns of Galilee (Mar_6:7-12). When they returned, Jesus knew they needed a time of **rest**. Jesus knew when it was time to work, and He knew when it was time to **rest**.

i. Jesus knew the importance of hard work better than anyone did. He said, *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.* (Joh_9:4) At the same time, He knew that we can only be most effective at work when we also take time for rest. Jesus and the disciples were constantly busy (**there were many coming and going, and they did not even have**

time to eat), so Jesus took them away to a **deserted place** for some rest.

ii. “*Rest* is necessary for those who *labour*; and a *zealous* preacher of the Gospel will as often stand in need of it as a *galley slave*.” (Clarke) b. **The multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities:** It’s easy to think that the multitude was nothing but rude and demanding. The disciples wanted to send them away (Mar_6:36), but Jesus **was moved with compassion for them**.

i. The disciples often saw the crowds as *work*, and as constant *demands*, especially at a time like this when their well-deserved rest was interrupted by the multitude. But Jesus saw them and was **moved with compassion**.

Each face reflected a need, a hunger, or a hurt. Being a thoroughly others-centered person, Jesus cared more about the needs of someone else than His own needs.

c. **Because they were like sheep without a shepherd:**

Jesus knew that without a shepherd, sheep were in a lot of trouble. They can’t fend for themselves against predators, and have a hard time finding the food and water they need. Jesus was **moved with compassion** for the people among the crowd, because He knew their pressing demands were prompted by great needs.

- **Sheep without a shepherd** are *needy*, because they have no Shepherd to fill their wants.

- **Sheep without a shepherd** are *hungry and thirsty*, because they have no Shepherd to make them lie down in green pastures or to lead them beside still waters.

- **Sheep without a shepherd** *hurt*, because they have no Shepherd to restore their soul.

- **Sheep without a shepherd** *wander*, because they have no Shepherd to lead them in paths of righteousness.

- **Sheep without a shepherd** are *vulnerable*, because they have no Shepherd to protect them with His rod.

i. “They were all slaves to the Romans, and many of them lame and diseased, but nothing troubled Christ so much as this, that they wanted pastors and teachers.” (Trapp)

d. **So He began to teach them many things:** As a faithful Shepherd, Jesus takes care of the most pressing need for these **sheep** - He feeds them with the Word of God.

2. (Mar_6:35-44) Jesus feeds the multitude.

When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.”

But He answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them *something* to eat?” But He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they found out they said, “Five, and two fish.” Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.

a. **Send them away . . . for they have nothing to eat:**

Both Jesus and the disciples saw exactly the same need among the multitude. The disciple’s solution was to “get rid of” the need by getting rid of the needy. Jesus saw a different solution, and wanted the disciples to see it also (**You give them something to eat**).

b. **Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?** It’s hard to know if the disciples were *angry* or just *couldn’t believe*

what Jesus said. Clearly, they thought spending about a year's income to feed this multitude for one meal was not only impossible, but also a waste.

i. Understandably, it never entered into their minds that Jesus might provide for the multitude with a miracle. God has resources that we know nothing about, so we can trust Him and be at peace even when we can't figure out how He will provide.

ii. Jesus' suggestion must have seemed so *extravagant* to the disciples. "Jesus if we had that kind of money, we would never spend it on one meal for this crowd. They annoy us, and they would be hungry again in a few hours.

Shouldn't the money be spent on something else?" But Jesus will perform an extravagant miracle because He wanted to sit down to a dinner with the multitude - because He loved them.

c. **How many loaves do you have? Go and see:** God's way of provision always begins with *what we already have*. He wants us to use what we already have wisely. Don't foolishly pray for more from God if you don't use what He already has given you in a godly way.

i. Of course, what they did have was almost laughably small. **Five loaves** and **two fish** were about enough for one or two people, because they were small loaves and small fishes. Even though the amount was tiny, Jesus still started with what they had.

d. **Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass:** Why did Jesus do this?

Because these people were like *sheep without a shepherd*, and Jesus will be their shepherd. The Good Shepherd *makes me lie down in green pastures*. (Psa_23:2) e. **So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties:** Jesus *organized* the multitude. He didn't want a mob scene; He wanted to have a nice dinner with these people. God likes

organization, especially when it comes to managing what He provides for us.

i. The ancient Greek word for **groups** “is a very pictorial word. It is the normal Greek word for the rows of vegetables in the vegetable garden. When you looked at the little groups, as they sat there in their orderly rows, they looked for all the world like the rows of vegetables in a series of garden plots.” (Barclay)

f. **He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves:** When Jesus **blessed** before the meal, He didn’t bless the food; He **blessed** God for supplying it. The idea of praying before a meal isn’t to bless the food, it is to bless - in the sense of thanking and honoring - God for blessing *us* with the food.

i. “Jesus faithfully followed the accepted form: he took the bread in his hands, pronounced the blessing, broke the bread into pieces and distributed it. The only deviation from normal practice was that while praying Jesus looked toward heaven rather than downward, as prescribed.” (Lane)

g. **So they all ate and were filled:** Jesus miraculously multiplied the loaves and fishes, until far more than 5,000 were fed. Seemingly, the miracle happened in the hands of Jesus, not in miraculously provided.

i. It really seems too extravagant. Why feed the multitude until they are **filled** and can’t eat any more? Why not just give them a little meal? Wouldn’t that be enough? No. Jesus is having people He loves over for dinner, and there will always be *more* than enough food. That’s how much Jesus loved them and loves us.

ii. Jesus provided extravagantly, yet simply. As long as He was making food miraculously, He could have provided steak and lobster and any number of other great things. But He simply gave people bread and fish. When Jesus provides, don’t be surprised if He provides simply.

iii. If someone left hungry, it was either because they refused the bread from Jesus, or because the apostles didn’t

distribute the bread to everyone. Jesus supplied plenty for everybody to eat a good meal. But everybody had to eat for *himself*. Sometimes when we attend a spiritual meal, we gather food for everyone else except ourselves.

iv. The assurance that Jesus can provide - even miraculously - for all of our needs should be precious to us; it was to the earliest Christians. On the walls of the catacombs, and other places of early Christian art, loaves and fishes are common pictures

v. If Jesus could do this much with so little, He can do the same with our little lives. What we have in ourselves to give others is insignificant, but when we put it in Jesus' hands, He can do great things with our gifts and talents to touch the lives of others.

h. **And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish:** Jesus could have just left this behind, but He didn't. Jesus generously provides, but He doesn't want things wasted. It isn't because Jesus is cheap, or doesn't trust for future provision; He simply knew that wastefulness didn't glorify the God of all provision.

3. (Mar_6:45-46) Jesus departs for prayer.

Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray.

a. **He sent the multitude away:** Jesus loved the multitude, but he was not obsessed with crowds. He knew when to tell them (kindly, of course) to go home (**He sent the multitude away**).

b. **He departed to the mountain to pray:** A long, difficult day spent ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the multitude left Jesus exhausted. But that hard day drove Jesus *to prayer*, not *from prayer*.

i. "His retreat to the hillside for prayer and the subsequent withdrawal from Galilee are the direct results of the outburst of enthusiasm which followed the feeding of the multitude.

Jesus refused to be the warrior-Messiah of popular expectations.” (Lane)

4. (Mar_6:47-52) Jesus walks on the water.

Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He *was* alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

a. **The boat was in the middle of the sea:** Jesus sent the disciples across the Sea of Galilee (Mar_6:45). As Jesus prayed in the heights above the Sea of Galilee, **He saw them straining at the rowing** as they attempted to cross the lake in the face of the **wind**. Unknown to the disciples, Jesus saw their difficulty and cared for them.

i. It was difficult to get across because *a great wind was blowing* (Joh_6:18). They had rowed for much of the night had had only come about halfway across the lake (Joh_6:19).

ii. “The apostolic crew rowed, and rowed, and rowed, and it was no fault of theirs that they made no progress, ‘for the wind was contrary unto them.’ The Christian man may make little or no headway, and yet it may be no fault of his, for the wind is contrary. Our good Lord will take the will for the deed, and reckon our progress, not by our apparent advance, but by the hearty intent with which we tug at the oars.” (Spurgeon)

iii. **About the fourth watch of the night** is somewhere around 3 a.m.

b. **He came to them, walking on the sea:** Jesus almost walked casually, because He **would have passed them by**.

Jesus only came over to them after they responded with fear and **cried out**.

i. How strange it would have been to see Jesus **walking on the sea**. On that stormy, wind-swept lake we wouldn't be surprised if He slid down a few peaks on His way to the disciples.

c. **He went up into the boat to them:** As Jesus got into the boat with them, miraculously the boat was instantly carried over to the other side (Joh_6:21). Jesus rescued His disciples from working in futility. This was a miracle meant to assure them that He was in fact in control, and that He would always lovingly be there to help them fulfill what He commanded.

i. "He came walking on the waves; and so he puts all the swelling storms of life under his feet. Christians, why be afraid?" (Augustine)

ii. We also know that it was on this occasion that Peter got out of the boat, walking on the water to Jesus (Mat_14:28-31). There is reason - from history and subtle clues, not explicitly from the Scriptures - to believe that Peter was the main source for Mark's gospel. If this was the case, Peter may have left out the story because he didn't want to be exalted for walking on the water - or to be humbled for sinking! It's easy to criticize Peter for sinking, but have you ever gotten out of the boat yourself?

iii. "Mark does not give the incident of Peter's walking on the water and beginning to sink. Perhaps Peter was not fond of telling that story." (Robertson)

5. (Mar_6:53-56) Jesus heals many in unusual ways.

When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry

about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

a. **As many as touched Him were made well:** With this description of the healing ministry of Jesus, Mark concludes a brief section where we see the power of Jesus over the laws of nature. Normally, five thousand are not fed by one small lunch. Normally, men don't walk on water. Normally, the sick are not instantly healed. None of this is normal, except by the power of God.

b. If Jesus had this kind of great power then, does He not have the same power now? Is your idea of God too small?

(Mar 6:2) When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue.³ Many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did he get these ideas?⁴ And what is this wisdom that has been given to him? What are these miracles that are done through his hands?

(Mar 6:3) Isn't this the carpenter, the son⁵ of Mary⁶ and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren't his sisters here with us?" And so they took offense at him.

(Mar 6:4) Then⁷ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, and among his relatives, and in his own house."

(Mar 6:5) He was not able to do a miracle there, except to lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

(Mar 6:6) And he was amazed because of their unbelief. Then⁸ he went around among the villages and taught.

(Mar 6:7) ***Sending Out the Twelve Apostles***

Jesus⁹ called the twelve and began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority over the unclean spirits.¹⁰

(Mar 6:8) He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff¹¹ — no bread, no bag,¹² no money in their

belts — (Mar 6:9) and to put on sandals but not to wear two tunics.¹³

(Mar 6:10) He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there¹⁴ until you leave the area.

(Mar 6:11) If a place will not welcome you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off¹⁵ your feet as a testimony against them."

(Mar 6:12) So¹⁶ they went out and preached that all should repent.

(Mar 6:13) They cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

(Mar 6:14) ***The Death of John the Baptist***

Now¹⁷ King Herod¹⁸ heard this, for Jesus'¹⁹ name had become known. Some²⁰ were saying, "John the baptizer²¹ has been raised from the dead, and because of this, miraculous powers are at work in him."

(Mar 6:15) Others said, "He is Elijah." Others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets from the past."

(Mar 6:16) But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised!"

(Mar 6:17) For Herod himself had sent men, arrested John, and bound him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod²² had married her.

(Mar 6:18) For John had repeatedly told²³ Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."²⁴

(Mar 6:19) So Herodias nursed a grudge against him and wanted to kill him. But²⁵ she could not

(Mar 6:20) because Herod stood in awe of²⁶ John and protected him, since he knew that John²⁷ was a righteous and holy man. When Herod²⁸ heard him, he was thoroughly baffled,²⁹ and yet³⁰ he liked to listen to John.³¹

(Mar 6:21) But³² a suitable day³³ came, when Herod gave a banquet on his birthday for his court officials, military commanders, and leaders of Galilee.

(Mar 6:22) When his daughter Herodias³⁴ came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

(Mar 6:23) He swore to her,³⁵ "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."³⁶

(Mar 6:24) So³⁷ she went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" Her mother³⁸ said, "The head of John the baptizer."³⁹

(Mar 6:25) Immediately she hurried back to the king and made her request:⁴⁰ "I want the head of John the Baptist on a platter immediately."

(Mar 6:26) Although it grieved the king deeply,⁴¹ he did not want to reject her request because of his oath and his guests.

(Mar 6:27) So⁴² the king sent an executioner at once to bring John's⁴³ head, and he went and beheaded John in prison.

(Mar 6:28) He brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.

(Mar 6:29) When John's⁴⁴ disciples heard this, they came and took his body and placed it in a tomb.

(Mar 6:30) ***The Feeding of the Five Thousand***

Then⁴⁵ the apostles gathered around Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught.

(Mar 6:31) He said to them, "Come with me privately to an isolated place and rest a while" (for many were coming and going, and there was no time to eat).

(Mar 6:32) So they went away by themselves in a boat to some remote place.

(Mar 6:33) But many saw them leaving and recognized them, and they hurried on foot⁴⁶ from all the towns⁴⁷ and arrived there ahead of them.⁴⁸

(Mar 6:34) As Jesus⁴⁹ came ashore⁵⁰ he saw the large crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were

like sheep without a shepherd. So⁵¹ he taught them many things.

(Mar 6:35) When it was already late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is an isolated place⁵² and it is already very late.

(Mar 6:36) Send them away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something for themselves to eat."

(Mar 6:37) But he answered them,⁵³ "You⁵⁴ give them something to eat." And they said, "Should we go and buy bread for two hundred silver coins⁵⁵ and give it to them to eat?"

(Mar 6:38) He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five — and two fish."

(Mar 6:39) Then he directed them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.

(Mar 6:40) So they reclined in groups of hundreds and fifties.

(Mar 6:41) He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. He⁵⁶ gave them to his⁵⁷ disciples to serve the people, and he divided the two fish among them all.

(Mar 6:42) They all ate and were satisfied,

(Mar 6:43) and they picked up the broken pieces and fish that were left over, twelve baskets full.

(Mar 6:44) Now⁵⁸ there were five thousand men⁵⁹ who ate the bread.⁶⁰

(Mar 6:45) ***Walking on Water***

Immediately Jesus⁶¹ made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dispersed the crowd.

(Mar 6:46) After saying good-bye to them, he went to the mountain to pray.

(Mar 6:47) When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea and he was alone on the land.

(Mar 6:48) He⁶² saw them straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. As the night was ending,⁶³ he came to them walking on the sea,⁶⁴ for⁶⁵ he wanted to pass by them.⁶⁶

(Mar 6:49) When they saw him walking on the water⁶⁷ they thought he was a ghost. They⁶⁸ cried out,

(Mar 6:50) for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them:⁶⁹ "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid."

(Mar 6:51) Then he went up with them into the boat, and the wind ceased. They were completely astonished, (Mar 6:52) because they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

(Mar 6:53) ***Healing the Sick***

After they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret⁷⁰ and anchored there.

(Mar 6:54) As they got out of the boat, people immediately recognized Jesus.⁷¹

(Mar 6:55) They ran through that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever he was rumored to be.⁷²

(Mar 6:56) And wherever he would go — into villages, towns, or countryside — they would place the sick in the marketplaces, and would ask him if⁷³ they could just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

(Mar 7:1) ***Breaking Human Traditions***

Now¹ the Pharisees² and some of the experts in the law³ who came from Jerusalem⁴ gathered around him.

(Guzik)

Mar 7:1-37

Mark 7 - DECLARING FOOD AND PEOPLE "CLEAN"

A. A dispute about ritual washings.

1. (Mar_7:1-5) Religious leaders from Jerusalem come to find fault and to ask questions about the failure of the disciples to observe ceremonial washings.

Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

a. **Having come from Jerusalem:** This was another “official delegation” of religious leaders **from Jerusalem**, coming to evaluate the ministry of Jesus. We saw a previous delegation in Mar_3:22, and they pronounced a harsh, condemning judgment against Jesus. This delegation **from Jerusalem** has already made up their mind about Jesus. Now they are just trying to “pin” something on Him.

i. The *concept* of evaluating Jesus’ ministry was fine. In outward appearance, these men were protecting Israel from a potential false prophet or false messiah. But the way they *actually evaluated* Jesus was all wrong. First, they already made up their mind about Jesus. Second, they did not evaluate Jesus against the measure of God’s Word.

The evaluated Him against the measure of their religious traditions.

b. **But eat bread with unwashed hands:** The religious leaders speak of elaborate ceremonial washings, not washing for the sake of cleanliness. The observant Jews of that time strictly observed a rigid, extensive ritual for washing before meals.

i. The hand-washing described here was *purely ceremonial*. It wasn’t enough to properly clean your hands if they were very dirty. You would have to first wash your hands to make

them clean, then perform the ritual to make them *spiritually clean*. But why would they ever have such traditions?

ii. “The biblical mandate that the priests had to wash their hands and feet prior to entering the Tabernacle (Exo_30:19; Exo_40:12) provided the foundation for the wide-spread practice of ritual washings in Palestinian and diaspora Judaism.” (Lane)

iii. They even had an accompanying prayer to be said during the ritual washing: “Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the universe, who sanctified us by the laws and commanded us to wash the hands.” (Cited in Lane)

c. **Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders:** These washings were commanded by **tradition**, not by Scripture. The religious leaders *knew* this, yet they still criticized the disciples for not obeying these traditions.

i. In Judaism of that time, they honored the *Scriptures* - what we would call the Old Testament - as the *written law*. But there was also the *oral law*, which was written down, but was man’s tradition and interpretation on top of the *written law*. Many Jewish leaders of Jesus’ time honored the *oral law* even more than the *written law*.

ii. “Rabbi Eleazer said, ‘He who expounds the Scriptures in opposition to the tradition has no share in the world to come’ . . . The *Mishna*, a collection of Jewish traditions in the *Talmud*, records, ‘It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis than to contradict Scripture itself.’” (Wiersbe)

iii. “The Jews have several ordinary sayings, that show in what esteem they had these traditions, as *If the scribes say our right hand is our left, and our left hand is our right, we are to believe them*. And, *There is more in the words of the scribes than the words of the law* . . . The Jewish Rabbi Jose saith, *He sinneth as much as who eateth with unwashen hands, as he that lieth with an harlot*. ” (Trapp)

iv. “There had grown up a great body of traditions; traditions which in the first place were intended to be interpretations of the law, and applications of the law to local circumstances; traditions which in the second place became interpretations of traditions, and applications of traditions; and the traditions in the third place, which were interpretations of interpretations of interpretations of traditions!” (Morgan)

v. What a person says never has the same authority as God’s Word. Even if they sincerely say it is from God, it never has the same authority as God’s Word. Even if everyone accepts it, it never has the same authority as God’s Word. Even if it makes perfect sense, it never has the same authority as God’s Word.

vi. “It was Jesus’ failure to support the validity of the oral law which made him an object of concerted attack by the scribes.” (Lane)

d. **For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders:** For these ceremonial washings, special stone vessels of water were kept, because ordinary water might be unclean. To **wash your hands in a special way**, you started by taking at least enough of this water to fill one and one-half egg shells. Then, you poured the water over your hands, starting at the fingers and running down towards your wrist. Then you cleansed each palm by rubbing the fist of the other hand into it. Then you poured water over your hands again, this time from the wrist towards the fingers.

i. A *really* strict Jew would do this not only before the meal, but also between each course.

ii. The rabbis were deadly serious about this. They said that bread eaten with unwashed hands was no better than excrement. One rabbi who once failed to perform the ritual washing was excommunicated. Another rabbi was imprisoned by the Romans, and he used his ration of water

for ceremonial cleansing instead of drinking, nearly dying of thirst. He was regarded as a great hero for this sacrifice.

iii. If they were as concerned about cleansing their *hearts* as they were about their *hands*, they would be more godly men! We always want to think there is some ritual we can *do* to cleanse ourselves.

iv. It's easy for us to think these religious leaders, or this whole religious culture was really stupid and phony for their emphasis on traditions like this. But we don't realize how subtly these things emerge, and how spiritual they seem to be, especially in the beginning. Many rituals or traditions seem to be built on unshakable spiritual logic: • Doesn't God want us to honor Him in everything we do?

- Didn't God command the priests to wash their hands before serving Him?
- Shouldn't every faithful follower of God have the same devotion as a priest?
- Isn't every meal sacred to God?
- Shouldn't we take every opportunity to make ourselves pure before the Lord?
- Doesn't God say, *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart* (Psa_24:3-4)?

v. When the questions are put this way, it's easy to say "Yes, yes, yes," until you have agreed with the logic supporting the tradition. But if in the end you have a word of man, a tradition of man, a ritual of man, that has the same weight as the Word of God, you're wrong. Your "spiritual logic" doesn't matter. You're wrong.

2. (Mar_7:6-9) Jesus' answer: you religious leaders exalt man's tradition over God's will.

He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold

the tradition of men; the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”

He said to them, “*All too well* you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”

a. **You hypocrites:** Why was Jesus so stern in His reply? Because the leaders were far too concerned with trivial matters like ritual washing. When they focused on these trivial traditions, they excluded everyone who didn’t keep the traditions, and so they discouraged them from coming to God.

i. The Living Bible paraphrases Isaiah’s quote: *These people speak very prettily about the Lord but they have no love for Him at all. Their worship is a farce, for they claim God commands the people to obey their petty rules.*

b. **This people honors Me with their lips:** Yes, they honored God **with their lips**; but in fact, God said of them **their heart is far from Me**. It is possible to have the *image* of being religious or spiritual, but actually be far from God.

This was exactly the case with these religious leaders.

i. This is the whole idea behind the word **hypocrite**. The word in the ancient Greek language referred to “an actor” or “someone who wears a mask.” The image they promote is more important to them than what they actually are.

ii. Would God say something similar to us?

- “They attend church, **but their heart is far from Me**”
- “They read their Bible, **but their heart is far from Me**”
- “They pray eloquently, **but their heart is far from Me**”
- “They contribute money, **but their heart is far from Me**”
- “They do ministry, **but their heart is far from Me**”
- “They love to sing, **but their heart is far from Me**”
- “They talk to others about Jesus, **but their heart is far from Me**”

c. **Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men:**

This is one of the pillars of legalism. Taking a commandment

or opinion of men, and teaching or promoting it as a doctrine from God is what supports legalism. It gives man's word the same weight as God's word.

i. If I say, "In my opinion, you should no longer eat hamburgers from MacDonald's" then you are free to say "That's a nice opinion, now leave me alone." But when someone says, "God says you should no longer eat hamburgers from MacDonald's" then they make it seem like you are opposing *God* if you don't do as they say.

ii. Not everything in the Christian life is a matter of right and wrong. Some things - many things - are simply matters of personal conscience before God. The Scriptures do not command ritual washing before meals. If you want to do it, then fine. Do it unto the Lord, and without a sense of spiritual superiority before your brothers and sisters. If don't want to do it, fine also. Don't do it unto the Lord, and don't look down upon those whose conscience compels them to do the ritual washing.

d. **You reject the commandment of God:** This is another pillar of legalism. It would be bad enough to *add* the commandments of men to the word of God. But almost without fail, the legalist or religious hypocrite goes the next step -

to **reject the commandment of God** and to **keep your tradition**. In doing this, they *subtract* the real essence and focus of God's word.

i. "He made it perfectly clear first of all that the tradition of man misses its own aim. Men are still defiled, wash they ever so often." (Morgan)

ii. "To the spiritual mind, it is a question of unceasing wonder that men should be so ready to follow and even fearlessly contend for the authority of human traditions, while they are just as ready to ignore the plain teachings of the Word of God." (Ironsides)

3. (Mar_7:10-13) An example of how their traditions dishonored God: the practice of not helping your parents

with “devoted”
goods.

“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* Corban”; ‘ (that is, a gift *to God*), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

a. **For Moses said:** The Old Testament clearly lays out the responsibility of children to **honor** their parents. When children are young and in their parent’s household, they are also responsible to *obey* their parents. But even when they are no longer responsible to *obey*, they are still responsible to **honor**.

b. **Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban:** In this practice, a son could say that his possessions or savings were **Corban** - that is, specially devoted to God - and therefore unavailable to help his parents.

b. Through this, a son could completely disobey the command to **honor your father or mother**, and do it while being ultra-religious. Jesus called this **making the word of God of no effect through your tradition**.

4. (Mar_7:14-16) Jesus speaks to the multitude about the mere image of religion.

When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”

a. **There is nothing that enters a man from the outside which can defile him:** This is not to say that there are not defiling things that we can take into ourselves (such as pornography). But in this specific context, Jesus spoke

about ceremonial cleanliness in regard to food, and He anticipated when all foods would be declared kosher (Act_10:15).

b. The things which come out of him, those are things that defile a man: The fundamental principle is simple.

Washing with “unclean hands” or any other such thing that we “put into us” is not defiling. Rather, what comes out of us defiles, and reveals that we have unclean (defiled) hearts.

i. “Although it may not seem so now, this passage, when it was first spoken, was well-nigh the most revolutionary passage in the New Testament.” (Barclay)

5. (Mar_7:17-23) Jesus speaks to His disciples about religious externalism.

When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?” And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

a. Are you thus without understanding also? In response to the parable, Jesus amplifies the point made to the multitudes. We are defiled from the *inside out* rather than from the *outside in*, and this is particularly true of ceremonial things like foods.

b. For from without, out of the heart of men, proceed evil: God is far more concerned with what comes *out* of us than what goes *into* us. This is *especially* true when it comes to foods and traditions and rituals.

c. **Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications:** This is a thirteen-part list that exposes the kind of evil that lives in the human heart. You don't need to travel a long distance to find the source of these sins. You don't need to conduct an exhaustive search. All you need to do is look at your own heart. "The source from which these rivers of pollution proceed is the natural heart of man. Sin is not a splash of mud upon man's exterior, it is a filth generated within himself." (Spurgeon) i. "I sicken as I think how man has plagued his fellow-men by his sins. But I will not go through the list, nor need I: the devil has preached upon this text this week, and few have been able to escape the horrible exposition."

(Spurgeon)

ii. There's a huge danger in looking at this list and saying, "I sure would never do this or that." If we don't see the capability of these kind of sins in us, then we are out of touch with the reality of our fallen nature.

d. **Evil thoughts:** "Every outward act of sin is preceded by an inward act of choice; therefore Jesus beings with the evil thought from which the evil action comes." (Barclay) i. "Thoughts are the eggs of words and actions, and within the thoughts lie compacted and condensed all the villainy of actual transgressions. If men did but more carefully watch their thoughts, they would not so readily fall into evil habits; but men first indulge the thought of evil, and then the imagination of evil; nor does the process stay there. Picturing it before their mind's eye, they excite their own desires after it; these grow into a thirst and kindle into a passion." (Spurgeon)

e. **Blasphemy:** "When this is used of words against man, it means *slander*; when it is used of words against God, it means *blasphemy*. It means insulting man or God." (Barclay)

f. This is a powerful reminder that what God first wants from us is our *heart*. We can only really be changed before God

from the *inside out*. If the life and the power and the work of God isn't real in our *heart*, then it isn't real at all.

B. Two wonderful examples of the healing power of Jesus.

1. (Mar_7:24-26) A Gentile woman's request.

From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know *it*, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

a. **He entered a house and wanted no one to know it:**

Jesus traveled some 50 miles to the north to visit these Gentile cities (**the region of Tyre and Sidon**). This is unusual in Jesus' ministry, because His focus was on *the lost sheep of Israel* (Mat_15:24).

i. It also shows that Jesus did not obey the Jewish traditions that said a faithful Jew would have *nothing* to do with Gentiles, and would *never* enter a Gentile's house.

ii. "The previous incident shows Jesus wiping out the distinction between clean and unclean foods. Can it be that here, in symbol, we have him wiping out the difference between clean and unclean people? Just as a Jew would never soil his lips with forbidden foods, so he would never soil his life by contact with the unclean Gentile."

(Barclay) This was "a concrete example of Jesus' disregard for the scribal concept of defilement." (Lane)

iii. **Wanted no one to know it:** At the same time, Jesus didn't want to needlessly offend people. He knew that time for breaking down the wall between Jew and Gentile by bringing them into one body (the church) was still in the future. So while not keeping His presence in **the region of Tyre and Sidon** strictly secret, He did not want it publicized.

b. **But He could not be hidden:** It's a glorious principle - Jesus cannot **be hidden**. Anytime Jesus is present *at all*, He finds a way to touch lives, because He cannot be hidden.

c. **She came and fell at His feet . . . she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter:** This woman came to intercede for her daughter, and she is a picture of an intercessor because she made her daughter's needs her own.

2. (Mar_7:27-30) Jesus responds to the woman's request.

But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs."

And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

a. **Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs:** Jesus seems to discourage the woman, reminding her that **the children** (the Jewish people) get priority over the **little dogs** (Gentiles like her).

i. In that day, Jews often called Gentiles "dogs" in a very derogatory way. "The dog was not the well-loved guardian that it is to-day; more commonly it was the symbol of dishonour. To the Greek, the word *dog* meant a shameless and audacious woman; it was used exactly with the connotation that we use the word *bitch* to-day. To the Jews it was equally a term of contempt." (Barclay)

ii. Yet Jesus did not use the normal word for "dogs." Instead He softened it into **little dogs** - essentially, reminding the woman of her place as a Gentile, yet not wanting to push her completely away. "In Greek, diminutives are characteristically affectionate. Jesus took the sting out of the word." (Barclay)

b. **Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs:** The woman responds with great faith. First, she accepted her low place before

Jesus by not debating the reference to **little dogs**. Second, she asked Jesus to deal with her on her own low level (**even the little dogs under the table eat**). She therefore received from Jesus.

i. We need to see the power of coming to God as we are, and letting Him make true His promises to those weak and unclean. If the woman had responded, “Who are you calling a dog?” she would not have received from Jesus what her daughter needed. Her humble, faith-filled submission to Jesus brought the victory.

ii. “Nothing appealed to our blessed Lord more than faith coupled with humility.” (Ironsides) Some people come to God with a kind of *faith*, but without humility. Others come to God with a kind of *humility*, but without faith. But if the two are combined it is a powerful thing before God.

iii. Clarke praises the prayer of this woman showing it has nine notable features: “1. It is short; 2. humble; 3. full of faith; 4. fervent; 5. modest; 6. respectful; 7. rational; 8. relying only on the mercy of God; 9. persevering.”

3. (Mar_7:31-37) The healing of a deaf and dumb man.

Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee.

Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him.

And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed *it*. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

a. **They begged Him to put His hand on him:** This is another example of intercession. The friends of this troubled man came and brought his need to Jesus.

b. **He took him aside . . . put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue:** Jesus used a curious manner in healing this man. Why would Jesus use such an unusual way of healing?

i. Jesus used many different ways of healing. He healed with a word, healed without a word, healed in response to one's faith, healed in response to the faith of another, healed those who asked, and He healed those He approached.

Jesus didn't want to be tied down to any "one method" to show that His power was not dependent on any method, but on the sovereign power of God.

ii. Many people cared about this man, and perhaps many had prayed for his healing. But no one every stuck their fingers in his ears and spit on his tongue like this. Jesus did something completely new to catch this man's attention, because He could not catch his attention with words. "Through touch and the use of spittle Jesus entered into the mental world of the man and gained his confidence." (Lane)

iii. Undoubtedly, Jesus knew there was something special in His manner that would minister to this man. "He adapts His method to the peculiar circumstances of need of the one with whom He is dealing. I am quite convinced if we could perfectly know these men we should discover the reason for the method. In each case Christ adapted Himself to the need of the man." (Morgan)

c. **He sighed:** "Behold, 'a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief!' Behold a Man exercising a ministry full of healing power and elemental light; but never forget that this service was costly." (Morgan) i. "The 'sigh' was an inward groan, our Lord's compassionate response to the pain and sorrow sin has brought into the world. It was also a prayer to the Father on behalf of the handicapped man. (The same word is used

in connection with prayer in Rom_8:23, and the noun in Rom_8:26)." (Wiersbe)

ii. **He sighed** "To show the *wretched place* of man by sin, and how *tenderly concerned* God is for his present and eternal welfare; and to intimate that men should seek the salvation of God in the spirit of genuine *repentance*, with *strong crying and tears*." (Clarke)

d. **Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly:** The ancient Greek word for **impediment in his speech** is *mogilalon*, and is only used here in the New Testament. It is a word that is also used once in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, in Isa_35:5-6 : *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb [mogilalon] sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.* Mark wants us to know that the Messiah is here, bringing the glorious benefits of His rule.

i. "Mark's use of an extremely rare word to describe the man's speech defect is almost certainly an allusion to Isa_35:5 which celebrates God as the one who comes in order to unstop the ears of the deaf and to provide song for the man of inarticulate speech." (Lane)

e. **He has done all things well:** Jesus does **things well**. There is no shoddy, slip-shod work with Him. It is true of *creation*, but it is even more true of His work of *redemption*.

(Mar 7:2) And they saw that some of Jesus' disciples ate their bread with unclean hands, that is, unwashed.

(Mar 7:3) (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they perform a ritual washing,⁵ holding fast to the tradition of the elders.

(Mar 7:4) And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. They hold fast to many other traditions: the washing of cups, pots, kettles, and dining couches.⁶)⁷

(Mar 7:5) The Pharisees and the experts in the law asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat⁸ with unwashed hands?"

(Mar 7:6) He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written:

**' This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart⁹ is far from me.**

(Mar 7:7) **They worship me in vain,
teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.** '¹⁰

(Mar 7:8) Having no regard¹¹ for the command of God, you hold fast to human tradition."¹²

(Mar 7:9) He also said to them, "You neatly reject the commandment of God in order to set up¹³ your tradition.

(Mar 7:10) For Moses said, '**Honor your father and your mother,**'¹⁴ and, '**Whoever insults his father or mother must be put to death.**'¹⁵

(Mar 7:11) But you say that if anyone tells his father or mother, 'Whatever help you would have received from me is *corban*'¹⁶ (that is, a gift for God), (Mar 7:12) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother.

(Mar 7:13) Thus you nullify¹⁷ the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like this."

(Mar 7:14) Then¹⁸ he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand.

(Mar 7:15) There is nothing outside of a person that can defile him by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles him."¹⁹

(Mar 7:16) (TEXT OMITTED)

(Mar 7:17) Now²⁰ when Jesus²¹ had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable.

(Mar 7:18) He said to them, "Are you so foolish? Don't you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him?

(Mar 7:19) For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer."²² (This means all foods are clean.)²³

(Mar 7:20) He said, "What comes out of a person defiles him.

(Mar 7:21) For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, (Mar 7:22) adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly.

(Mar 7:23) All these evils come from within and defile a person."

(Mar 7:24) ***A Syrophenician Woman's Faith***

After Jesus²⁴ left there, he went to the region of Tyre.²⁵ When he went into a house, he did not want anyone to know, but²⁶ he was not able to escape notice.

(Mar 7:25) Instead, a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit²⁷ immediately heard about him and came and fell at his feet.

(Mar 7:26) The woman was a Greek, of Syrophenician origin. She²⁸ asked him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

(Mar 7:27) He said to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs."²⁹

(Mar 7:28) She answered, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

(Mar 7:29) Then³⁰ he said to her, "Because you said this, you may go. The demon has left your daughter."

(Mar 7:30) She went home and found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

(Mar 7:31) ***Healing a Deaf Mute***

Then³¹ Jesus³² went out again from the region of Tyre³³ and came through Sidon³⁴ to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis.³⁵

(Mar 7:32) They brought to him a deaf man who had difficulty speaking, and they asked him to place his hands on him.

(Mar 7:33) After Jesus³⁶ took him aside privately, away from the crowd, he put his fingers in the man's³⁷ ears, and after spitting, he touched his tongue.³⁸

(Mar 7:34) Then³⁹ he looked up to heaven and said with a sigh, " *Ephphatha*" (that is, "Be opened").⁴⁰

(Mar 7:35) And immediately the man's⁴¹ ears were opened, his tongue loosened, and he spoke plainly.

(Mar 7:36) Jesus ordered them not to tell anything. But as much as he ordered them not to do this, they proclaimed it all the more.⁴²

(Mar 7:37) People were completely astounded and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

(Mar 8:1) ***The Feeding of the Four Thousand***

In those days there was another large crowd with nothing to eat. So¹ Jesus² called his disciples and said to them, (Guzik)

Mar 8:1-9:1

Mark 8 - WHO IS JESUS?

A. Feeding the four thousand.

1. (Mar_8:1-4) Jesus gives the disciples an opportunity for faith.

In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples *to Him* and said to them, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar." Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?"

a. **I have compassion on the multitude:** The situation is similar to the recent feeding of the five thousand. We see both a hungry multitude and a compassionate Jesus, so Jesus presents the dilemma to the disciples: what do we do?

b. **How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?** We can imagine Jesus hoping one of the disciples might say, "Jesus, You did this before. You can do the same kind of work again." Jesus hoped they would regard His past faithfulness as a promise to meet their present need.

i. It's easy to criticize - or even mock - the disciples for their response. But when we see how patient Jesus is when we lack faith, or when we are simply dense in understanding, then we sympathize with the disciples.

2. (Mar_8:5-10) Jesus and the disciples feed the multitude.

He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude. They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before *them*. So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

a. **How many loaves do you have?** Jesus asked them to give up their *own food* this time. Before, they used the food of the little boy, but this time Jesus made the disciples give.

b. **So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground:** "He intended them not only a running banquet, a slight come-off, but a full feast, a good meal, and therefore bade them sit down and feed their fill." (Trapp) c. **Broke them and gave them to the His disciples to set before them:** Jesus did what He only could do - the creative

miracle. But Jesus left to the disciples what they could do - the distribution of the bread.

d. **They also has a few small fish:** It seems that the disciples kept the fish from Jesus until they saw He could multiply the bread. They needed to see that we are safe giving *everything* to Jesus.

i. "Why were these not mentioned before? Could it be that they had been withheld by the doubting disciples until they saw how the bread was multiplied? Apparently, the fishes were blessed separately and then distributed as the bread had been." (Ironsides)

e. **So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments:** At the end of the meal, they gathered more bread than they had to begin with. This is miraculous provision. The **seven large baskets** show that God provided out of His abundance.

f. Many scholars argue this specific occasion never happened. They claim that this is merely a re-telling of the feeding of the 5,000. Their main argument is "how could the disciples forget Jesus' previous work so quickly?" But even mature Christians, having experienced God's power and provision sometimes go on to act in unbelief. This isn't so surprising after all.

B. The leaven of the Pharisees.

1. (Mar_8:11-12) The Pharisees ask for a sign from heaven.

Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

a. **Seeking from Him a sign from heaven:** In the mind of the Pharisees, this was not a request for another miracle of the type Jesus had already done. They are asking for a dramatic sign from the sky, something similar Elijah's fire from heaven (1 Kings 18).

i. **Testing Him:** This is not a friendly encounter. The word **tested** could be translated *tempted*. The Pharisees are tempting Jesus to perform a miraculous sign just as Satan did in the wilderness.

b. **He sighed deeply in His spirit:** This attack, and the unbelief it showed, distressed Jesus. He was amazed at the unbelief and audacity of these religious leaders. "The sigh physical, its cause spiritual - a sense of irreconcilable enmity, invincible unbelief, and coming doom." (Bruce)

i. This demand for a "special" sign was an extreme example of the arrogance and pride of the Pharisees towards Jesus. Essentially, they said, "You have done a lot of small-time miracles. Come on up to the big leagues and really show us something."

ii. "Behind the demand for a sign was the prior, firm conviction that Jesus' authority was demonic in origin, his works are an expression of black magic." (Lane)

c. **No sign shall be given to this generation:** Jesus refuses, because His miracles are not done with the intention of convincing hardened unbelievers. Instead, Jesus did miracle to show the power of God in the context of mercy. Those who believe that if people see enough signs, they will come to faith, presume to know more than Jesus did. He condemned the generation seeking a sign.

2. (Mar_8:13-15) Jesus warns of the *leaven* of the Pharisees and Herod.

And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

a. **Beware of the leaven of the Pharisses:** This leaven isn't merely yeast, but a pinch of dough left over from the previous batch, as in the making of sourdough bread. This is how bread was commonly leavened in the ancient world,

and a little pinch of dough from the old lump could make a whole new lump of dough rise and “puff up.” So, the work of leaven was considered an illustration of the work of sin and pride. The presence of a little can corrupt a large amount.

i. “Sometimes the Jew used the word leaven much as we would use the term *original sin*, or the natural evil of human nature.” (Barclay)

b. Jesus essentially said, “Beware of the evil way the Pharisees and Herod think of the Kingdom of the Messiah, for in a short time I will reveal the truth of it to you.” Both Herod and the Pharisees idealized the Kingdom as domineering power and authority. Herod saw it more as political power and authority, and the Pharisees saw it as more spiritual power and authority, but they still saw the kingdom in this high-minded way.

3. (Mar_8:16-21) Jesus questions the twelve about their lack of understanding.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “*It is* because we have no bread.” But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, “Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?” They said to Him, “Twelve.” “Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?” And they said, “Seven.” So He said to them, “How *is it* you do not understand?”

a. **It is because we have no bread:** When Jesus spoke of the *leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod*, the disciples didn’t relate it to a spiritual idea at all. All they could think of was the bread that goes in the stomach, not the bread that goes in the soul.

b. **Do you not yet perceive nor understand?** Jesus confronts His disciples over their lack of understanding.

From this, we can know that they *could have* done better than this. They could have understood more if they applied themselves more.

i. How much more could we understand if we applied ourselves more? What would Jesus have to say to us about our level of understanding? These disciples do not yet have the Holy Spirit indwelling them in full measure - but we do. What is our excuse?

c. **Do you not remember?** Their understanding should have been based on seeing what Jesus already did. We can always take the past faithfulness of God as a promise for His continued love and care.

i. This is one of the situations where we wish we had a recording of Jesus' words to hear what tone of voice He used? Was it a tone communicating *anger, concern, or frustration*? We know that even when Jesus confronted His disciples, He did it in *love*.

4. (Mar_8:22-26) Blind eyes are opened.

Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." Then He put *His* hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

a. **He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him:**

Adam Clarke has an interesting perspective on this: "It is likely that this was done merely to *separate* the *eyelids*; as, in certain cases of blindness, they are found always gummed together. It required a *miracle* to restore the *sight*, and this was done in consequence of Christ having laid his hands upon the blind man: it required *no* miracle to *separate* the

eyelids, and, therefore, *natural means* only were employed - this was done by rubbing them with spittle."

b. **He put His hands on his eyes again:** This is the only "gradual" or "progressive" healing described in the ministry of Jesus. It is another example of the variety of healing methods Jesus used.

i. But why did Jesus choose this method at this time? Probably as an illustration to His disciples, showing them then that their spiritual blindness - shown in the previous passage - will be healed, but only gradually.

ii. Truth be told, this is how *most* of God's work happens in us. We receive it little by little. We like to tell ourselves and others that we make huge spiritual leaps at one moment, but most real Christian growth happens little by little.

iii. Wessel Quoting Calvin: "And so the grace of Christ, which had formerly been poured out suddenly on others, flowed by drops, as it were, on this man."

iv. "Art thou *blind*? Then come to Jesus that he may restore thee. Hast thou a *measure* of light? Then pray that he may lay his hands *again* on thee, that thou mayest be enabled to read thy title *clear* to the heavenly inheritance."

(Clarke)

C. Jesus reveals His mission.

1. (Mar_8:27-30) Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah.

Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.

a. **Who do men say that I am?** Jesus did not ask this question because He didn't know who He was, or because He had a twisted dependence on the opinion of others. He

asked this question as an introduction to a more important follow-up question.

b. **John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets:** People who thought that Jesus was *John the Baptist* didn't know much about Him, and they didn't know that Jesus and John had ministered at the same time.

But both John and **Elijah** were national reformers who stood up to the corrupt rulers of their day.

i. Perhaps in seeing Jesus as **John the Baptist** or **Elijah**, people hoped for a political messiah who would overthrow the corrupt powers oppressing Israel.

c. Some thought Jesus was a herald of national repentance, like **John the Baptist** and some thought Jesus was a famous worker of miracles, like **Elijah**. Some thought Jesus was someone who spoke the words of God, like the prophets.

d. **But who do you say that I am?** It was fine for the disciples to know what *others* thought about Jesus. But Jesus had to ask them, as individuals, what *they* believed about Jesus.

e. **You are the Christ:** Peter knew the opinion of the crowd - while it was complimentary towards Jesus - wasn't accurate. Jesus was much more than John the Baptist, or Elijah, or a prophet. He was more than a national reformer, more than a miracle worker, more than a prophet. Jesus is **the Christ**, the Messiah.

i. Calling Jesus the Messiah was right on the mark, but easily misunderstood. In the thinking of most people in Jesus' day, the Messiah was a political and national superman. "Toward the close of the OT period, the word 'anointed' assumed a special meaning. It denoted the ideal king anointed and empowered by God to deliver his people and establish his righteous kingdom." (Wessel)

2. (Mar_8:31-32 a) Jesus reveals His mission plainly: to come and die, and then rise again.

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly.

a. **That the Son of Man must suffer many things:** Why **must** Jesus **suffer many things** and **be killed**? Because this was the predicted work of the Messiah (Isa_53:3-12). He **must** die, and He **must** after His death **rise again**.

i. The suffering and death of Jesus was a **must** because of two great facts: the *man's sin* and *God's love*. While His death was the ultimate example of man's sin against God, it was also the supreme expression of God's love to man.

b. **He spoke this word openly:** This was an unbelievable shock to anyone expecting or hoping that Jesus was the national and political messiah. It is as if a presidential candidate announced toward the end of his campaign that he will go to Washington to be rejected and executed.

i. "A suffering Messiah! Unthinkable! The Messiah was a symbol of strength, not weakness." (Wessel)

ii. "Sometimes the Messiah was thought of as a king of David's line, but more often he was thought of as a great, super-human figure crashing into history to remake the world and in the end to vindicate God's people . . . The Messiah will be the most destructive conqueror in history, smashing his enemies into utter extinction." (Barclay) 3.

(Mar_8:32-33) Peter rebukes Jesus; Jesus rebukes Peter.

And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

a. **Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him:** Peter's intent was love for Jesus, but he was unwittingly used of Satan. You don't have to be demon possessed to be used of Satan, and we need to be on guard lest we are unwittingly used.

i. Mat_16:17-19 gives us a little more insight into this passage. We read there that after Peter made the confession of faith recorded in Mar_8:29 (*You are the Christ*), Jesus then *answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.* Jesus went on to further build up Peter after that complimentary word. It's not hard to see Peter following these steps:

- Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah

- Jesus compliments Peter, telling him that God revealed this to him

- Jesus tells of His impending suffering, death, and resurrection

- Peter feels this isn't right, and he feels that he hears from God

- Peter rebukes Jesus

ii. We can infer that if Peter was bold enough to **rebuke** Jesus, he was confident that God told him what was right and that Peter was wrong. Where it all broke down was that Peter was far too confident in his ability to hear from God.

- What Peter said didn't line up with the Scriptures

- What Peter said was in contradiction to the spiritual authority over him

b. **Get behind Me, Satan!** This was a strong rebuke from Jesus, yet entirely appropriate. Though a moment before Peter spoke as a messenger of God, he then spoke as a messenger of **Satan**. Jesus knew there was a satanic purpose in discouraging Him from His ministry on the cross, and Jesus would not allow that purpose to succeed.

i. We can be sure that Peter *was not aware* that he spoke for Satan, just as a moment before he was not aware that he spoke for God. It is often much easier to be a tool of God or of the devil than we want to believe.

c. **You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men:** Jesus exposes how Peter came into this satanic way of thinking. He didn't make a deliberate choice

to reject God and embrace Satan; he simply let his mind settle on **the things of men** instead of **the things of God**, and Satan took advantage of it.

i. Peter is a perfect example of how a sincere heart coupled with man's thinking can often lead to disaster.

ii. Peter's rebuke of Jesus is an evidence of the *leaven* mentioned in Mar_8:15. With his mind on **the things of men**, Peter only saw the Messiah as the embodiment of power and strength, instead of as a suffering servant.

Because Peter couldn't handle a suffering Messiah, he rebuked Jesus.

4. (Mar_8:34) In light of His mission, Jesus warns those who want to follow Him.

When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

a. **Let him deny himself, and take up his cross:** It was bad enough for the disciples to hear that Jesus would suffer, be rejected, and die on a cross. Now Jesus tells them that they must do the same thing!

b. **Deny himself, and take up his cross:** Everybody knew what Jesus meant when He said this. Everyone knew that the cross was an unrelenting instrument of death. The **cross** had no other purpose.

i. The **cross** wasn't about religious ceremonies; it wasn't about traditions and spiritual feelings. The cross was a way to execute people.

ii. In these twenty centuries after Jesus, we have done a pretty good job in sanitizing and ritualizing the cross. How would we receive it if Jesus said, "Walk down death row daily and follow Me"? Taking up your cross wasn't a journey; it was a one-way trip. There was no return ticketing; it was never a round trip.

iii. "Cross bearing does not refer to some irritation in life. Rather, it involves the way of the cross. The picture is of a man, already condemned, required to carry his cross on the

way to the place of execution, as Jesus was required to do.”
(Wessel)

iv. “Every Christian must be a Crucian, said Luther, and do somewhat more than those monks that made themselves wooden crosses, and carried them on their back continually, making all the world laugh at them.”

(Trapp)

c. Jesus makes **deny himself** equal with **take up his cross**. The two express the same idea. The cross wasn’t about self-promotion or self-affirmation. The person carrying a cross knew they couldn’t save themselves.

i. “Denying self is not the same as self-denial. We practice self-denial when, for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities. But we deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determine to obey His will.”

(Wiersbe)

ii. Denying self means to live as an others-centered person. Jesus was the only person to do this perfectly, but we are to follow in His steps (**and follow Me**). This is following Jesus at its simplest: He carried a cross, He walked down death row; so must those who follow Him.

5. (Mar_8:35 to Mar_9:1) Why we must take up our cross and follow Jesus.

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

a. **Whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it**: We must follow Jesus this way because it is the only way that we will ever find life. It sounds strange to say,

“You will never live until you walk down death row with Jesus,” but that is the idea. You can’t gain resurrection life without dying first.

i. You don’t lose a seed when you plant it, though it seems dead and buried. Instead, you set the seed free to be what it was always intended to be.

b. **What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?** Avoiding the walk down death row with Jesus means that we may gain the **whole world**, and end up losing everything.

i. Jesus Himself had the opportunity to gain all the world by worshipping Satan (Luk_4:5-8), but found life and victory in obedience instead.

ii. Amazingly, the people who live this way before Jesus are the ones who are really, genuinely happy. Giving our lives to Jesus all the way, and living as an others-centered person does not take away from our lives, it adds to it c.

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed: It isn’t easy to walk death row with Jesus. It means that we have to associate ourselves with someone who was despised and executed. But if we are **ashamed** of Him, He will be **ashamed** of us.

i. “If Jesus Christ had come into the world as a mighty and opulent man, clothed with earthly glories and honours, he would have had a multitude of partisans, and most of them *hypocrites*.” (Clarke) ii. Jesus is coming again **in glory**, and if we will rebel against the world, the flesh, and the devil, we will share in the glory.

iii. Most people think of following Jesus as conforming to the “establishment.” Actually, Jesus calls us to rebel against the established order of this world. We are called to rebel against the tyranny of the flesh, against the fear and conformity of the world, against the traditions of man. Jesus encourages a “slave rebellion,” where the slaves of sin, Satan, and the world rebel against their masters.

d. Some standing here . . . will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God present with power:

Walking with Jesus doesn't just mean a life of death and crosses. It also means a life of the power and glory of the kingdom of God. Jesus promised some of His disciples glimpses of that power and glory.

i. "The unveiling of Jesus' glory in the presence of the three disciples corresponds to the assurance that *some will see*." (Lane)

(Mar 8:2) "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have already been here with me three days, and they have nothing to eat.

(Mar 8:3) If I send them home hungry, they will faint on the way, and some of them have come from a great distance."

(Mar 8:4) His disciples answered him, "Where can someone get enough bread in this desolate place to satisfy these people?"

(Mar 8:5) He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They replied, "Seven."

(Mar 8:6) Then³ he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. After he took the seven loaves and gave thanks, he broke them and began giving them to the disciples to serve. So⁴ they served the crowd.

(Mar 8:7) They also had a few small fish. After giving thanks for these, he told them to serve these as well.

(Mar 8:8) Everyone⁵ ate and was satisfied, and they picked up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

(Mar 8:9) There were about four thousand⁶ who ate.⁷ Then he dismissed them.⁸

(Mar 8:10) Immediately he got into a boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.⁹

(Mar 8:11) ***The Demand for a Sign***

Then the Pharisees¹⁰ came and began to argue with Jesus, asking for¹¹ a sign from heaven¹² to test him.

(Mar 8:12) Sighing deeply in his spirit he said, "Why does this generation look for a sign? I tell you the truth,¹³ no sign will be given to this generation."

(Mar 8:13) Then¹⁴ he left them, got back into the boat, and went to the other side.

(Mar 8:14) ***The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod***

Now¹⁵ they had forgotten to take bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.

(Mar 8:15) And Jesus¹⁶ ordered them,¹⁷ "Watch out! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees¹⁸ and the yeast of Herod!"

(Mar 8:16) So they began to discuss with one another about having no bread.¹⁹

(Mar 8:17) When he learned of this,²⁰ Jesus said to them, "Why are you arguing²¹ about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Have your hearts been hardened?

(Mar 8:18) Though you have eyes, don't you see? And though you have ears, can't you hear?²² Don't you remember?

(Mar 8:19) When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?" They replied, "Twelve."

(Mar 8:20) "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?" They replied,²³

"Seven."

(Mar 8:21) Then²⁴ he said to them, "Do you still not understand?"²⁵

(Mar 8:22) ***A Two-stage Healing***

Then²⁶ they came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to Jesus²⁷ and asked him to touch him.

(Mar 8:23) He took the blind man by the hand and brought him outside of the village. Then²⁸ he spit on his eyes,

placed his hands on his eyes²⁹ and asked, "Do you see anything?"

(Mar 8:24) Regaining his sight³⁰ he said, "I see people, but they look like trees walking."

(Mar 8:25) Then Jesus³¹ placed his hands on the man's³² eyes again. And he opened his eyes,³³ his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

(Mar 8:26) Jesus³⁴ sent him home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."³⁵

(Mar 8:27) ***Peter's Confession***

Then Jesus and his disciples went to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.³⁶ On the way he asked his disciples,³⁷ "Who do people say that I am?"

(Mar 8:28) They said,³⁸ "John the Baptist, others say Elijah,³⁹ and still others, one of the prophets."

(Mar 8:29) He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him,⁴⁰ "You are the Christ."⁴¹

(Mar 8:30) Then⁴² he warned them not to tell anyone about him.⁴³

(Mar 8:31) ***First Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection***

Then⁴⁴ Jesus⁴⁵ began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer⁴⁶ many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law,⁴⁷ and be killed, and after three days rise again.

(Mar 8:32) He spoke openly about this. So⁴⁸ Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

(Mar 8:33) But after turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's."⁴⁹

(Mar 8:34) ***Following Jesus***

Then⁵⁰ Jesus⁵¹ called the crowd, along with his disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wants to become my

follower,⁵² he must deny⁵³ himself, take up his cross,⁵⁴ and follow me.

(Mar 8:35) For whoever wants to save his life⁵⁵ will lose it,⁵⁶ but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it.

(Mar 8:36) For what benefit is it for a person⁵⁷ to gain the whole world, yet⁵⁸ forfeit his life?

(Mar 8:37) What can a person give in exchange for his life?

(Mar 8:38) For if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him⁵⁹ when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

(Mar 9:1) And he said to them, "I tell you the truth,¹ there are some standing here who will not² experience³ death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."⁴

(Mar 9:2) ***The Transfiguration***

Six days later⁵ Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John and led them alone up a high mountain privately. And he was transfigured before them,⁶

(Guzik)

Mar 9:2-50

Mark 9 - THE TRANSFIGURATION

A. Jesus is transfigured.

1. (Mar_9:2-3) Jesus is transfigured before His disciples.

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

a. **Peter, James, and John:** Most people assume that Jesus took these three aside on this and other occasions because they were special favorites of the Lord. It could have also been because they were the three most likely to get into trouble, so He kept them close so He could keep a close eye on them.

b. **Led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves:** What started as a mountain retreat quickly changed as the glory of Jesus shined forth and Jesus was transformed right before the eyes of the disciples (**He was transfigured before them**).

i. What exactly happened here? Matthew says that Jesus' *face shone like the sun* (Mat_17:2), and both Matthew and Mark use the word **transfigured** to describe what happened to Jesus. For this brief time, Jesus took on an appearance more appropriate for the King of Glory than for a humble man.

c. **He was transfigured before them:** Mark does his best to describe for us - no doubt, through the eyes of Peter - what Jesus looked like. Basically, Jesus' whole appearance shined forth in glorious, bright light - **his clothes became shining**, and whiter than anything seen on this earth.

i. If we're not careful, we think of the transfiguration as just a bright light shined on Jesus. But this wasn't a light coming on Jesus from the outside. "The word *transfigured* describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. It is the opposite of 'masquerade,' which is an outward change that does not come from within." (Wiersbe) ii. How did this happen? This was not a *new* miracle, but the temporary pause of an ongoing miracle. The real miracle was that Jesus, most of the time, could *keep* from displaying His glory.

iii. "For Christ to be glorious was almost a less matter than for him to restrain or hide his glory. It is forever his glory that he concealed his glory; and that, though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor." (Spurgeon)

d. Why did Jesus do this, and why at this time? Because Jesus just told His disciples that He was going the way of the cross (Mar_8:31), and that spiritually they should follow Him in the way of the cross (Mar_8:34-38). It would have been easy for them to lose confidence in Jesus after such a "negative" statement.

e. But now, as Jesus displays His glory as King over all God's Kingdom, the disciples know that Jesus knows what He is

doing; if He is to suffer, be rejected and killed, He is still in control.

f. Jesus also shows in a dramatic way that cross bearers will be glory receivers. The *goal* isn't the cross. The cross is the *path* to the goal, and the goal is the glory of God.

2. (Mar_9:4) Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus.

And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

a. **Elijah appeared to them with Moses:** Why **Elijah** and **Moses**? Because they represent those who are caught up to God (Jud_1:9; 2Ki_2:11). Moses represents those who die and go to glory, and Elijah represents those who are caught up to heaven without death (as in 1Th_4:13-18).

i. They also represent the Law (**Moses**) and the Prophets (**Elijah**). The sum of Old Testament revelation comes to meet with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration.

ii. They also figure together in the future fulfillment of prophecy. **Elijah** and **Moses** are likely the witnesses of Rev_11:3-13.

iii. Right in front of them, the disciples saw evidence of life beyond this life. When they saw Moses and Elijah, they knew that Moses had passed from this world 1,400 years before and Elijah had passed some 900 years before. Yet there they were, alive in glory before them. It gave them confidence in Jesus' claim to resurrection.

iv. How did the disciples know that it was Elijah and Moses? It seems that they just knew. This shows us that we will know each other when we get to heaven. After all, do you think we'll be more dumb in heaven than we are on earth?

b. **They were talking with Jesus:** What did they talk about? Elijah and Moses were interested in the outworking of God's plan through Jesus. They spoke about what Jesus *was about to accomplish at Jerusalem* (Luk_9:31).

3. (Mar_9:5-10) Peter's unwise offer to build three tabernacles to honor Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, and the Father's response.

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”; because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

a. **Let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah:** When Peter saw Jesus in His glory he must have said to himself: “All right! This is how it should be! Forget this business about suffering, being rejected, and crucified! Let’s build some tabernacles so we can live this way with the glorified Jesus all the time.”

b. **Because he did not know what to say:** We often get into trouble when we speak like Peter did, not knowing what to say. We also see that Peter spoke out of *fear* (**for they were greatly afraid**). We say many foolish things without thinking and out of fear.

i. “Peter was openhearted, bold, enthusiastic. To my mind, there is something very lovable about Peter; and, in my opinion, we need more Peters in the church of the present day. Though they are rash and impulsive, yet there is fire in them, and there is steam in them, so that they keep us going.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Luke tells us that Peter, James, and John were all asleep, and when they awoke they saw Jesus transfigured with Elijah and Moses. “Peter, suddenly awakened from sleep in time to see the glory fade, was garrulous in his terror, as some men are.” (Cole)

iii. What Peter said was so foolish because he put Jesus on an equal level with Elijah and Moses - one tabernacle for each! But Jesus isn't just another Moses or Elijah, or even a *greater* Moses or Elijah. Jesus is the Son of God.

iv. **For they were greatly afraid:** Being in the presence of God's glory isn't necessarily a pleasant experience - especially when we are like Peter, not really glorifying God. Sometimes the glory of God is shown in the way that He corrects us.

c. **And a cloud came and overshadowed them:** This is a familiar cloud, the cloud of God's glory traditionally known as the *Shekinah*.

- It was the pillar of cloud that stood by Israel in the wilderness (Exo_13:21-22)

- It was the cloud of glory that God spoke to Israel from (Exo_16:10)

- It was from this cloud of glory that God met with Moses and others (Exo_19:9; Exo_24:15-18, Num_11:25; Num_12:5; Num_16:42)

- It was the cloud of glory that stood by the door of the Tabernacle (Exo_33:9-10)

- It was from this cloud that God appeared to the High Priest in the Holy Place inside the veil (Lev_16:2) • It was from this cloud God appeared to Solomon when the temple was dedicated, so filling the temple that the priests could not continue ministering (1Ki_8:10-11, 2Ch_5:13-14)

- It was the cloud of Ezekiel's vision, filling the temple of God with the brightness of His glory (Eze_10:4) • It was the cloud of glory that overshadowed Mary when she conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luk_1:35)

- It was the cloud of glory that received Jesus into heaven at His ascension (Act_1:9)

- It was the cloud that will display the glory of Jesus Christ when He returns in triumph to this earth (Luk_21:27)

d. **This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!** The voice from the cloud

of glory makes it clear that Jesus is not on the same level as Elijah and Moses. He is the **beloved Son** - so **Hear Him!**

i. "There are thousands of priests in the world who say, 'Hear us'; but the Father says 'Hear him.' Many voices clamor for our attention: new philosophies, modern theologies, and old heresies revived, all call to us and entreat us to hearken, but the Father says, 'Hear him.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. This word from heaven answered the disciples' doubts after the revelation of the suffering Messiah. It assured them that the plan was all right with God the Father also.

iii. "The disciples wished to detain Moses and Elijah that they might hear *them*: but God shows that the *law* which had been in *force*, and the *prophets* which had *prophesied*, until now, must all give place to Jesus; and he alone must now be attended to, as the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*." (Clarke)

e. **He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead:** After it was all over, Peter, John and James **kept this word to themselves** - after all, who would believe them?

i. But the event left a lasting impression on these men. Peter relates what happened in 2Pe_1:16-18, how the voice from God saying, "**This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!** " still rang in his ears, confirming who Jesus was.

ii. As impressive as this experience was, it in itself did not change the lives of the disciples as much as being born again did. Being born again by the Spirit of God is the great miracle, the greatest display of the glory of God ever.

iii. "It is a better thing for a man to live near to Christ, and to enjoy his presence, than it would be for him to be overshadowed with a bright cloud, and to hear the divine Father himself speaking out of it." (Spurgeon) 4. (Mar_9:11-13) The problem of Elijah coming first: a question based on Mal_4:5-6.

And they asked Him, saying, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Then He answered and told them,

“Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.”

a. **Why do the scribes say:** The coming of Elijah before the Messiah is clearly prophesied in Mal_4:5-6. So the disciples wonder, “If Jesus is the Messiah, then where is Elijah?”

b. **Elijah does come first:** Jesus tells them that the Elijah prophecy in Malachi will indeed be fulfilled. Though Jesus does not say this here, the prophecy of Elijah’s coming had to do with Jesus’ *second* coming, not His first, and Elijah will likely return as one of the two witnesses as Rev_11:2-13.

i. **How is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer:** Jesus draws attention to the contrast between His first and second comings here. The disciples were well aware of the prophecies concerning the glory of the Messiah; Jesus asked them to consider the prophecies concerning His suffering and that He **must be treated with contempt**.

c. **But I say to you that Elijah has also come:** While it is true that Elijah is yet to come in reference to the second coming of Jesus, there is also a sense in which **Elijah has also come** - in the person of John the Baptist.

i. John was not a reincarnation of Elijah, but he did minister in the role and spirit of Elijah. John the Baptist was a type or a picture of Elijah.

B. Jesus casts out a difficult demon from a boy.

1. (Mar_9:14-18) The disciples are unable to cast out a demon.

And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to *Him*, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. “And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

a. **Scribes disputing with them:** From the context, it is reasonable to assume that scribes criticized the disciples for their inability to help the demon-possessed boy. “One wonders why these same scribes, instead of further embarrassing the crestfallen disciples before the crowd, did not set about exorcising the demon themselves, as a proof of orthodoxy.”

(Cole)

i. This kind of conflict was exactly what Peter wanted to avoid by staying up on the mountain of transfiguration (Mar_9:5). But it couldn’t be that way. They simply had to come down off the mountain and deal with what they found.

ii. “He found disputing scribes, a distracted father, a demon-possessed boy, and defeated disciples . . . He silenced the scribes, He comforted the father, He healed the boy, He instructed the disciples.” (Morgan)

b. **A mute spirit:** In the eyes of contemporary Jewish exorcists, this was a particularly difficult - if not impossible - demon to cast out. This was because they believed that you had to learn a demon’s name before you could cast it out, and if a demon made someone mute, you could never learn his name.

c. **Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid:** The boy displays signs that many today would regard as evidence of epilepsy, but Jesus perceived that they were caused by demonic possession. Surely, some of whom we diagnose as physically or mentally ill today are actually demon possessed.

i. “Jesus addresses the demon as a separate being from the boy as he often does. This makes it difficult to believe that

Jesus was merely indulging popular belief in a superstition. He evidently regards the demon as the cause in this case of the boy's misfortune." (Robertson)

d. **That they should cast it out, but they could not:**

This particular case of demon possession was too much for the disciples, though Jesus had given them authority over unclean spirits (Mar_6:7).

e. Apparently some demons are stronger - that is, more stubborn or intimidating than others. Eph_6:12 seems to describe different ranks of demonic beings, and it isn't a stretch to think that some ranks might be more powerful than others are.

2. (Mar_9:19-27) Jesus delivers the boy.

He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

a. **O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?** Who does Jesus call the **faithless generation**? He might refer to the contentious scribes, to the desperate father, or to the unsuccessful disciples.

b. **And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground:** When Jesus comes near, the demon inside the boy knows that his time is short. He wants to do as much damage as he can before he leaves.

i. “However, it letteth us see how hardly the devil parteth with his possession in us in any degree, and how ready he is to run the length of his line in doing us mischief.” (Poole)

c. **But if you can do anything:** The man seems unsure if Jesus can do anything. But the “if” isn’t in regard to what Jesus can do. The “if” is in regard to the man’s faith. So Jesus told him, **if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.** When we trust God as true, and all His promises as true, **all things** He promises **are possible.**

i. But we have to believe God is true: “If all the angels in heaven were to march by me in a file, and assure me that God would keep his word, I should say, ‘I did not require you to tell me that, for the Lord never fails to be as good as his word.’ God is so true that the witness of angels would be a superfluity. If my father were to make a statement, I certainly should not call in his servant to confirm it.” (Spurgeon)

d. **Lord, I believe; help my unbelief:** The poor father in this account is challenged by Jesus’ exhortation for faith. He did believe in Jesus’ power to deliver his boy - after all, why else would he have come to Jesus? But he also recognizes his doubts. So, he tearfully pleads with Jesus: **Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!**

i. In this case, the man’s **unbelief** was not a rebellion against or a rejection of God’s promise. He did not *deny* God’s promise; he *desired* it. However, it just seemed too good to be true. Thus, he says, **“help my unbelief! ”**

ii. **“Help my unbelief”** is something a man can only say by *faith*. “While men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief; but, as soon as they get a little faith, then

they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief.” (Spurgeon)

e. **Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him:** Jesus had no difficulty whatsoever in dealing the demon, even though the demon made a final display of his terrible strength. Knowing he must leave, the demon did the most damage he could before he left. But it was not lasting damage.

i. "He will do what harm he can when he cannot do us the harm he would." (Poole)

3. (Mar_9:28-29) Why were the disciples unsuccessful?

And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

a. **Why could we not cast it out?** Jesus reveals the reason for their weakness: it was due to a lack of **prayer and fasting**.

b. It isn't that **prayer and fasting** make us more "worthy" to cast out demons; it is that prayer and fasting draw us closer to the heart of God, and they put us more in line with His power. They are an expression of our total dependence on Him.

i. Jesus had already given them the authority to cast out demons (Mar_3:14-15), but "The authority that Jesus had given them was effective only if exercised by faith, but faith must be cultivated through spiritual discipline and devotion." (Wiersbe)

ii. This total dependence on God is the remedy for many spiritual problems. To be disappointed in yourself is to have trusted in yourself.

C. On to Jerusalem.

1. (Mar_9:30-32) Jesus reminds His disciples of His mission.

Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*. For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

a. **He did not want anyone to know it:** Why was it that Jesus **did not want anyone to know it**? Probably because Jesus did not want the Galilean multitude to "cling" to Him, and hinder this important trip to Jerusalem.

b. The Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him: Jesus clearly told His disciples of this destiny back in Mar_8:31. Now, as they depart from Galilee towards Jerusalem, they head towards the destiny Jesus spoke of.

c. But they did not understand this saying: The disciples couldn't "process" what Jesus said about His destiny in Jerusalem - to die and then rise again. Unfortunately, they **were afraid to ask**.

2. (Mar_9:33-34) The dispute on the road.

Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the greatest*.

a. They had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest: It seems that this was the favorite debating topic among the disciples. They all counted on Jesus to take over the world as "King Messiah," and the debate was about who was most worthy to be Jesus' chief associate.

b. But they kept silent: This was an embarrassed silence. It shows that they were ashamed of this obsession with greatness. It was a healthy sense of shame, and proved that some of the message of Jesus was sinking into their hearts.

3. (Mar_9:35-37) True greatness in the kingdom of God.

And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

a. He sat down: This is important, because by sitting down Jesus showed that he was going to teach. "When a Rabbi was teaching as a Rabbi, as a master teaches his scholars

and disciples, when he was really making a pronouncement, he sat to teach. Jesus deliberately took up the position of a Rabbi teaching his pupils before he spoke.” (Barclay) b. **If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all:** The question at hand was “Who would be the greatest?” Jesus could have answered the question, “Hey dummies - *I’m* the greatest.” But Jesus does not put the focus on Himself. For an example of greatness, Jesus puts forth the **last** and the **servant**.

i. Of course, Jesus *is* the greatest in the kingdom. So when He said **last** and **servant**, He was really describing Himself - and He accurately expressed His nature. He was truly **first**, yet made Himself **last of all and servant of all** for our sake.

ii. Jesus challenges us to be **last of all**. The desire to be praised and to gain recognition should be foreign to a follower of Jesus. Jesus wants us to embrace **last** as a choice, allowing others to be preferred before us, and not only because we are forced to be last.

iii. Jesus challenges us to be the **servant of all**. In the worldly idea of power, the great man is distinguished by how many people serve him. In ancient China, it was fashionable for wealthy men to grow their fingernails so long that their hands were unusable for basic tasks. This was to demonstrate that they did not need to do *anything* for themselves; there was always a servant there to wait on them. The world may think of this as greatness, but God does not. Jesus declared that true greatness is shown not by how many serve you, but by how many you serve.

iv. “It was not that Jesus abolished ambition. Rather he recreated and sublimated ambition. For the ambition to rule he substituted the ambition to serve. For the ambition to have things done for us he substituted the ambition to do things for others.” (Barclay)

v. “How easy a thing had it been for our Saviour, had he intended in any such primacy in the church as the papists

contend for, to have said, Peter shall be the greatest!" (Poole)

c. **He took a little child and set him in the midst of them:** Jesus draws their attention to His nature by presenting a child as an example. In that day, children were regarded more as property than individuals. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard. Jesus says that the way we receive people regarded like **children** shows how we would receive Him (**whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me**).

i. Children are not threatening. We aren't afraid of meeting a five-year old in a dark alley. When we have a tough, intimidating presence, we aren't like Jesus.

ii. Children are not good at deceiving; they don't do a very good job at fooling their parents. When we are good at hiding ourselves and deceiving others, we aren't like Jesus.

iii. Look at what the devil wants to do with children (Mar_9:17-27) and look at what Jesus does with children!

d. Because Jesus is **last of all and servant of all** and like a child, when we honor and receive a child - or someone who is a servant like Jesus - we honor and receive Jesus Himself.

4. (Mar_9:38-42) True greatness isn't cliquish; it has an inclusive instinct.

Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."

a. **Teacher, we saw someone:** It had to frustrate Jesus' disciples that these other followers of Jesus successfully cast out demons, when they had just failed (Mar_9:18). No wonder John wanted them to stop!

i. "We may therefore safely imagine that this was either one of John the Baptist's disciples, who, at his master's command, had believed in Jesus, or one of the *seventy*, whom Christ had sent out, Luk_10:1-7, who, after he had fulfilled his commission, had retired from accompanying the other disciples; but as he still held fast his faith in Christ, and walked in good conscience, the influence of his Master still continued with him, so that he could cast out demons as well as the other disciples." (Clarke)

b. **For he who is not against us is on our side:** There are many that may be wrong in some aspect of their presentation or teaching, yet they still set forth Jesus in some manner. Let God deal with them. Those who are not against a Biblical Jesus are still for Him, at least in some way.

i. Paul saw many men preaching Jesus from many motives, some of them evil - yet he could rejoice that Christ was preached (Php_1:15-18).

ii. "If a man be not an open enemy to Christ, he ought to be presumed to be his friend, at least so far as not to be discouraged in doing a good work." (Poole)

c. **For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name:** Because of this principle of unity, it is appropriate to show kindness to others in the name of Jesus. Even **a cup of water**, if given in the nature of Jesus, will be rewarded.

i. Nothing could seem more petty than giving a mere **cup of water**. But God remembers the heart, not only the gift itself.

d. If a small act of kindness towards others done in Jesus' name will be eternally remembered, so will any cause for stumbling. And the punishment is severe: **it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.**

i. In that day, there were two different sizes of millstones. The smaller one was used by a woman to grind a small amount of grain. The larger one was turned by a donkey to grind a larger amount of grain. Jesus refers to the larger kind of **millstone** here.

ii. Most Christians don't take this statement of Jesus seriously enough, and don't appreciate the great danger there is in doing something to cause another to stumble - especially **one of these little ones**.

iii. Some Christians think nothing of drawing young, weak Christians into their own little squabbles and divisions.

They themselves emerge without much damage, but the **little ones** they brought with them into the squabble often end up shipwrecked.

5. (Mar_9:43-48) The urgency to enter God's kingdom.

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"

a. **If your hand makes you sin, cut it off:** Tragically, some have taken these words of Jesus in a sense He did not intend, and have cut off their hands, or mutilated themselves in some other way in a mistaken battle against sin.

i. The problem with taking Jesus' words literally here is that bodily mutilation does not go *far enough* in controlling sin. Sin is more a matter of the heart than of any particular limb or organ, and if I cut off my right hand, my left is still ready

to sin. If I completely dismember my body, I can still sin in my mind and in my heart.

ii. "This was not a demand for physical self-mutilation, but in the strongest manner possible Jesus speaks of the costliest sacrifices." (Lane)

b. **It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell:** With this exhortation, Jesus tried to correct a big misunderstanding on the part of the disciples. They thought of the kingdom mainly in terms of reward, not in terms of sacrifice.

i. Essentially, Jesus restates what Mark recorded in 8:34-35: that if we try to save our lives, we will lose them, and to follow Jesus means to pick up our cross and follow Him.

c. **To go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched:** the word **hell** is an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom," a place outside Jerusalem's walls desecrated by Molech worship and human sacrifice, thus turned into the dump where rubbish and refuse were burned. The smoldering fires and festering worms made it a graphic and effective picture of the fate of the damned.

i. This place is also called the "lake of fire" in Rev_20:13-15, prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat_25:41).

ii. "A child with a spoon may sooner empty the sea than the damned accomplish their misery. A river of brimstone is not consumed by burning." (Trapp)

d. **Where their worm does not die:** "This worm of conscience is worse than the fire, if worse may be: it is the very hell of hell, as being the furious reflection of the soul upon itself for all its neglected opportunities and flagitious practices."

(Trapp)

i. "It seems that every one has *his* worm, his *peculiar remorse* for the evils he did, and for the grace he rejected; while the *fire*, the state of excruciating torment, is *common* to all. Reader! May the living God save *thee* from this *worm*, and from this *fire!* " (Clarke) ii. "This worm (say divines) is

only a continual remorse and furious reflection of the soul upon its own wilful folly, and now woeful misery. Oh, consider this before thy friends be scrambling for thy goods, worms for thy body, devils for thy soul.” (Trapp)

e. The message of Jesus is clear: knowing how terrible hell is, it is worth any sacrifice to avoid. Therefore, we cannot think of the kingdom of God just in the context of reward; we must also think in terms of sacrifice.

i. Trapp on the terror of hell: “Where there is eternity of extremity. Of all outward torments none is more insufferable than that by fire; as of all inward, none like that of having worms ever grubbing and gnawing upon the entrails.”

6. (Mar_9:49-50) Jesus speaks of salt and fire.

“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt *is* good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

a. **For everyone will be seasoned with fire:** Jesus declared His followers will be **seasoned with fire**, and that **every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt**, that the salt must retain its **flavor**, and that it will bring **peace** among us.

b. What is Jesus talking about? This passage has led to many different interpretations.

i. The first main interpretation is that **fire** refers to tribulation and suffering; these things accompany the “living sacrifice” (Rom_12:1) of the disciple. Since Old Testament sacrifices always included salt (Lev_2:13), Jesus is saying “just as every sacrifice under the law required salt, so the living sacrifice My followers bring to Me must be seasoned with suffering and tribulations.”

ii. The other main interpretation is that **fire** refers to the Holy Spirit. As His presence in our lives “seasons” us, it purifies, preserves, and adds flavor to our lives, and so it makes our “living sacrifice” acceptable to God.

(Mar 9:3) and his clothes became radiantly white, more so than any launderer in the world could bleach them.

(Mar 9:4) Then Elijah appeared before them along with Moses,⁷ and they were talking with Jesus.

(Mar 9:5) So⁸ Peter said to Jesus,⁹ "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters¹⁰ — one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

(Mar 9:6) (For they were afraid, and he did not know what to say.)¹¹

(Mar 9:7) Then¹² a cloud¹³ overshadowed them,¹⁴ and a voice came from the cloud, "This is my one dear Son.¹⁵ Listen to him!"¹⁶

(Mar 9:8) Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more except Jesus.

(Mar 9:9) As they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

(Mar 9:10) They kept this statement to themselves, discussing what this rising from the dead meant.

(Mar 9:11) Then¹⁷ they asked him,¹⁸ "Why do the experts in the law¹⁹ say that Elijah must come first?"

(Mar 9:12) He said to them, "Elijah does indeed come first, and restores all things. And why is it written that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be despised?

(Mar 9:13) But I tell you that Elijah has certainly come, and they did to him whatever they wanted, just as it is written about him."

(Mar 9:14) ***The Disciples' Failure to Heal***

When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and experts in the law²⁰ arguing with them.

(Mar 9:15) When the whole crowd saw him, they were amazed and ran²¹ at once and greeted him.

(Mar 9:16) He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?"

(Mar 9:17) A member of the crowd said to him, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that makes him mute.

(Mar 9:18) Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but²² they were not able to do so."²³

(Mar 9:19) He answered them,²⁴ "You²⁵ unbelieving²⁶ generation! How much longer²⁷ must I be with you? How much longer must I endure²⁸ you?²⁹ Bring him to me."

(Mar 9:20) So they brought the boy³⁰ to him. When the spirit saw him, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He³¹ fell on the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

(Mar 9:21) Jesus³² asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood.

(Mar 9:22) It has often thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if you are able to do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

(Mar 9:23) Then Jesus said to him, " 'If you are able?'³³ All things are possible for the one who believes."

(Mar 9:24) Immediately the father of the boy cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

(Mar 9:25) Now when Jesus saw that a crowd was quickly gathering, he rebuked³⁴ the unclean spirit,³⁵ saying to it, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

(Mar 9:26) It shrieked, threw him into terrible convulsions, and came out. The boy³⁶ looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He is dead!"

(Mar 9:27) But Jesus gently took his hand and raised him to his feet, and he stood up.

(Mar 9:28) Then,³⁷ after he went into the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we cast it out?"

(Mar 9:29) He told them, "This kind can come out only by prayer."³⁸

(Mar 9:30) ***Second Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection***

They went out from there and passed through Galilee. But³⁹ Jesus⁴⁰ did not want anyone to know,

(Mar 9:31) for he was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men.⁴¹ They⁴² will kill him,⁴³ and after three days he will rise."⁴⁴

(Mar 9:32) But they did not understand this statement and were afraid to ask him.

(Mar 9:33) ***Questions About the Greatest***

Then⁴⁵ they came to Capernaum.⁴⁶ After Jesus⁴⁷ was inside the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"

(Mar 9:34) But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

(Mar 9:35) After he sat down, he called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."

(Mar 9:36) He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, (Mar 9:37) "Whoever welcomes⁴⁸ one of these little children⁴⁹ in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

(Mar 9:38) ***On Jesus'side***

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us."

(Mar 9:39) But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, because no one who does a miracle in my name will be able soon afterward to say anything bad about me.

(Mar 9:40) For whoever is not against us is for us.

(Mar 9:41) For I tell you the truth,⁵⁰ whoever gives you a cup of water because⁵¹ you bear Christ's⁵² name will never lose his reward.

(Mar 9:42) "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a huge millstone⁵³ tied around his neck and to be thrown into the sea.

(Mar 9:43) If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter into life crippled than to have⁵⁴ two hands and go into hell,⁵⁵ to the unquenchable fire.⁵⁶

(Mar 9:44) (*TEXT OMITTED*)

(Mar 9:45) If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off! It is better to enter life lame than to have⁵⁷ two feet and be thrown into hell.⁵⁸

(Mar 9:46) (*TEXT OMITTED*)

(Mar 9:47) If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out!⁵⁹ It is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than to have⁶⁰ two eyes and be thrown into hell, (Mar 9:48) where their worm never dies and the fire is never quenched.

(Mar 9:49) Everyone will be salted with fire.⁶¹

(Mar 9:50) Salt⁶² is good, but if it loses its saltiness,⁶³ how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

(Mar 10:1) ***Divorce***

Then¹ Jesus² left that place and went to the region of Judea and³ beyond the Jordan River.⁴ Again crowds gathered to him, and again, as was his custom, he taught them.

(Guzik)

Mar 10:1-52

Mark 10 - JESUS TEACHES ON MARRIAGE, RICHES, AND SERVICE

A. Marriage and divorce.

1. (Mar_10:1-2) A test from the Pharisees: **is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?**

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?”

testing Him.

a. **Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?** Divorce was a controversial topic in Jesus’ day, with two main schools of thought, centered around two of its most famous proponents. The first was the school of Rabbi Hillel (a lenient and popular view) and the school of Rabbi Shammai (a strict and unpopular view).

b. The real point of the Pharisees’ question is made clear by Matthew’s account: *Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?* (Mat_19:3) If the question is “**is it lawful**” then **lawful** is understood by *for just any reason*.

i. The debate centers around the Mosaic law which gave permission for divorce in Deu_24:1 : *When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house.* The debate among the rabbis tried to answer the question “What constitutes *uncleanness*?”

ii. Rabbi Shammai understood that *uncleanness* meant sexual immorality, and said that was the only valid reason for divorce. But Rabbi Hillel understood *uncleanness* to mean *any* sort of discretion, even to the point of burning the breakfast being valid grounds for divorce.

iii. William Barclay on the teaching of Rabbi Hillel on divorce and the term *uncleanness* in Deu_24:1 : “They said that it could mean if the wife spoiled a dish of food, if she spun in the streets, if she talked to a strange man, if she spoke disrespectfully of her husband’s relations in his hearing, if she was a brawling woman, (who was defined as a woman whose voice could be heard in the next house). Rabbi Akiba

even went the length of saying that it meant if a man found a woman who was fairer in his eyes than his wife was.”

c. The Pharisees are trying to get Jesus to speak against Moses or against popular thought; they hope they have caught Him on the horns of a dilemma.

3. (Mar_10:3-9) Jesus emphasizes marriage and God’s plan in marriage.

And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss *her*.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

a. **What did Moses command you?** Jesus gets back to the heart of the matter in Deu_24:1 : Moses did not **command** divorce, Moses **permitted** it. This went against the teaching of Rabbi Hillel, who taught that it was a *righteous duty* to divorce your wife if she displeased you in any way.

i. The rabbis of that day had a saying: “If a man has a bad wife, it is a religious duty to divorce her.” Jesus goes against this way of thinking.

b. The Mosaic law granting divorce was a concession to the **hardness of your heart**. It was never commanded by God, but permitted because of the **hardness** of the offending party (in the cruelty of their unfaithfulness to their spouse). It was also permitted because of the **hardness** of the offended party (being unable to perfectly forgive and restore a damaged relationship).

i. The law of Deu_24:1 was really given as a *protection* to the divorced wife. “Moses permitted divorce providing a certificate of divorce was given to the wife . . . Its primary

function was to provide a degree of protection for the woman who had been repudiated by her husband.” (Lane)

c. **But from the beginning of the creation:** Jesus now transitions from a talk about *divorce* to a talk about *marriage*.

The problem was not that they did not understand the law about divorce. The problem was that they did not understand what God said about *marriage*.

i. This emphasis on marriage, rather than divorce, is a wise approach for anyone interested in keeping a marriage together. Divorce cannot be seen as an option when things are hard. Marriage is like a mirror; it reflects what we put into it. If someone has divorce readily in their mind as a convenient option, divorce will be much more likely.

ii. **From the beginning:** It’s striking that Jesus takes us back to the beginning to learn about marriage. Today many want to say, “We live in different times” or “The rules are different today” or “We need a modern understanding.” But put all that away and listen to Jesus: go back to the beginning.

d. **From the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female:** God’s real purpose for marriage is not fulfilled in divorce, but only in seeing God’s original plan for marriage. In saying, “**God made them,**” Jesus asserts God’s “ownership” over marriage; it is God’s institution, not man’s, so His rules apply.

i. “Marriage is a condition of Divine expression and activity, therefore where its fundamental significances are forgotten, and its fundamental laws are disobeyed, it becomes the most tragic of all experiences.” (Morgan)

e. **And the two shall become one flesh:** By bringing the issue back to the foundation of marriage, Jesus makes it plain that couples must forsake their singleness (**a man shall leave his father and mother**), and come together in a **one flesh** relationship that is both a fact (**they are**) and a goal (**shall become**).

i. The term **joined to his wife** has the idea of *gluing two things together*. “Be glued to her . . . A husband ought to be as firm to his wife as to himself.” (Trapp) ii. The term Jesus uses for **joined together** is literally *yoked together*. Like two animals yoked together, couples must work together and head the same way to really be joined the way God wants them to be joined.

iii. Here, there is a new and overriding unity. The bond between a husband and wife should be even stronger than the bond between parent and child. The marriage bond should be stronger than the blood-bond. “And the law of God was not, that a man should forsake his wife whenever he had a mind to it, but that he should rather forsake his father and mother than his wife; loving his wife as his own body.” (Poole)

iv. “Not only meaning that they should be considered as *one* body, but also as two souls in one body, with a complete union of interests, and an indissoluble partnership of life and fortune, comfort and support, desires and inclinations, joys and sorrows.” (Clarke)

f. **What God has joined together**: Next, Jesus reminds the Pharisees that marriage is spiritually binding before God. Marriage is not merely a social contract, and as God has joined, He will keep together.

i. In using the terms **joined together** and **separate**, Jesus reminds us that divorce is really like an amputation.

Sometimes, in the most extreme circumstances, amputation may be the right thing to do. But the “patient” must first fit the criteria before God will recognize the “amputation.”

4. (Mar_10:10-12) Jesus clarifies the point for His disciples.

In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same *matter*. So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

a. **His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter:** This is not a one-verse teaching of all there is to know about divorce and remarriage. Jesus is clearly following up His remarks earlier in the chapter, where He indicated that God *did* permit (not command) divorce in the case of sexual immorality. Here, Jesus answers the question, “Then what about a divorce gained on *other* grounds?”

b. **Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her:** We can only understand this passage by taking into account *the whole counsel of God* (Act_20:27). In Matthew’s more complete recording of this teaching, he notes how Jesus said *And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery* (Mat_19:9). With this answer, Jesus interpreted the meaning of the word *uncleanness* in Deu_24:1, showing that divorce (and the freedom to remarry) was only permitted in the case of *sexual immorality*.

i. The ancient Greek word for *sexual immorality* is *porneia*; it is a broad word, covering a wide span of sexual impropriety. One may be guilty of *porneia* without actually having consummated an act of adultery.

ii. To this permission for divorce, Paul adds the case of abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1Co_7:15).

iii. Note that incompatibility, not loving each other anymore, brutality, and misery are not grounds for divorce, though they may be proper grounds for a separation and consequent “celibacy within marriage.”

c. **Commits adultery against her:** The reason why a person who does not have a legitimate divorce **commits adultery** upon remarrying (as well as their new spouse) is because they *are not* divorced in the eyes of God. Since their old marriage is still valid, they are actually guilty of bigamy and adultery.

i. We must come to grips with the fact that marriage, as a promise made to God, our spouse and the world, is a binding promise, and cannot be broken at our own discretion. There are certain cases where God allows the promise to be dissolved, but it is up to God and not us.

d. **If a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery:** This statement of Jesus shows why it is important to take the *whole counsel of God* on any given topic. If this were the only passage on divorce and remarriage in the Bible, then we should say that if anyone divorces for any reason, they then commit adultery, therefore God never permits remarriage in the case of divorce. But taking the *whole counsel of God* into account, it is impossible to say this.

i. There are some that neglect the *whole counsel of God* and say that God never allows remarriage after divorce. But when we see what the entire Bible says on the subject, we see that if a divorce is made on Biblical grounds (adultery or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse), there is *full right* to remarry.

ii. If a divorce is not based on Biblical grounds - the kind of **divorce** Jesus refers to here - then there is no right to remarry. This is because as far as God is concerned, *the marriage is still together*, and to marry another would be **adultery**.

iii. This means that as God looks down from heaven, He does not have three categories: single, married, and divorced. He has two categories: single and married. You are either bound under a marriage vow, or you are not. If you are, you can't marry another. If you are not, you are free to marry in the Lord. Understanding the *whole counsel of God* on this subject frees people from the stigma of "divorced" in the church.

5. (Mar_10:13-16) Jesus blesses the children and uses them as an example of how we must receive the kingdom of God.

Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, put *His* hands on them, and blessed them.

a. **They brought little children to Him:** The ancient Greek word used for **brought** (*prosphero*) suggests bringing the children to Jesus for dedication. "The word is commonly used of sacrifices, and suggests here the idea of *dedication*."

(Bruce)

b. **Let the little children come to Me:** Children love to come to Jesus, and it says something about Him that children loved Him and that He loved children. Children don't love mean, sour people.

i. Jesus' attitude towards children "can only be properly appreciated within the context of the calloused attitudes toward children that still prevailed within Hellenistic society in the first century. A papyrus dated Alexandria, June 17, 1 B.C., contains a letter of instruction from a husband to his expectant wife, who he supposes may have had her child: 'if it was a male child, let it live; if it was a female, cast it out.'"

(Lane)

c. **The disciples rebuked those who brought them:** Because children love to come to Jesus, we should never block the way - or fail to provide them a way. We know more about Jesus than the women of Judea did. Is there any good reason for us not to bring our own children to Jesus?

i. This is a duty for children's ministry workers, but especially for *parents*. The prayers and words of a parent can mean so much in the salvation of a child. Long into his adult life, Charles Spurgeon recalled the prayers of his mother for him: "Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words

of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember on one occasion her praying thus: 'Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.' That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience and stirred my heart."

ii. It is especially important to bring children to Jesus when we remember they have a whole life in front of them to serve God with. "Will you be very angry if I say that a boy is more worth saving than a man? It is infinite mercy on God's part to save those who are seventy; for what good can they now do with the [burnt] end of their lives? When we get to be fifty or sixty, we are almost worn out, and if we have spent all our early days with the devil, what remains for God? But these dear boys and girls - there is something to be made out of them. If now they yield themselves to Christ they may have a long, happy, and holy day before them in which they may serve God with all their hearts. Who knows what glory God may have of them? Heathen lands may call them blessed. Whole nations may be enlightened by them." (Spurgeon)

d. **He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them:** Jesus simply yet powerfully, **blessed them**. The ancient Greek verb is emphatic, literally meaning to *fervently bless*.

i. How could children receive such a blessing from Jesus? Because children can receive the blessing of Jesus without trying to make themselves worthy of it, or pretending they do not need it. We need to receive God's blessing the same way.

e. **For of such is the kingdom of God:** Children are not only for blessing; they are also examples of how we must enter the kingdom with a child *like* faith, not with a child *ish* faith. We must come to God with a faith that trusts God just

like a little child with trust his father - and leave all the problems up to daddy.

i. The emphasis isn't that children are humble and innocent, because sometimes they aren't. But the emphasis is on the fact that children will **receive**, and don't feel they have to *earn* everything they get. Children are in a place where often all they can do is **receive**. They don't refuse gifts out of self-sufficient pride. So we must **receive the kingdom of God as a little child** - because we surely will **by no means enter it** by what we *do* or *earn*.

B. Jesus teaches on riches.

1. (Mar_10:17-18) An eager man questions Jesus.

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God."

a. **Good Teacher:** This title was never applied to other Rabbis in Jesus' day, because it implied sinlessness, a complete goodness. Jesus and everyone else recognized that He was being called by a unique title.

i. "There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a rabbi being addressed as 'Good Master'." (Plummer, cited in Geldenhuys) Only God was called "good" by ancient rabbis.

b. **Why do you call Me good?** This is not Jesus denying His deity. Instead, He invited the young man to reflect upon it.

It is as if Jesus said, "do you really know what you are saying when you **call Me good?** "

c. **What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** The focus of the man's question is **what shall I do**. He thought eternal life was a matter of earning and deserving, not of relationship. As he bowed down on his knees in front of Jesus, the mere closeness of that relationship made him closer to salvation than anything he could **do**. He didn't

want Jesus to be his savior, he wanted Jesus to show him the way to be his own savior.

i. The man really didn't know who *he* was also. He thought that he was righteous, and didn't really know the kind of person he was. When you don't know who Jesus really is, you probably won't know who you are either. And knowing Jesus comes first.

2. (Mar_10:19-22) Jesus' counsel to the young man.

"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

a. **You know the commandments:** Being a Jew, this man knew the commandments. Jesus was careful to quote to him only those commandments that have to do what is often called the second table of the law, how we treat one another.

i. Each one of these commandments is pure, just, and good. How great the world would be if everyone would live by just the five commandments Jesus mentions here?

b. **Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth:** In his reply, this ruler says of himself that he has kept all these commandments, and that he has done so since his youth. Is this possible? Yes and no. "Yes" according to the way these commandments were commonly interpreted but "no" according to the true meaning God had for these commandments.

i. In Php_3:6, Paul says that in the eyes of the religious Jews, he could say that for him, *concerning the righteousness which is in the law*, [he was] *blameless*.

ii. But Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, gave us the real meaning of the law - it goes to the heart, not just to your actions. You can have a heart filled with adultery even if you never commit it; a heart filled with murder even if you never do it; a heart that steals even if you never steal. And God looks at the heart as well as the actions.

iii. The man *should* have responded, "There is no way I have kept or can keep the law of God completely. *I need a savior.*"

c. **Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him:** Jesus was filled with loving compassion for this man because his life was so empty. He had climbed to the top of the ladder of success, only to find his ladder was leaning against the wrong building.

d. **One thing you lack:** Instead of challenging the man's fulfillment of the law (which Jesus had every right to do), Jesus instead took him further down his own path. "So you want to find fulfillment and salvation by *doing* for God? Then here, *do* it all." Jesus wanted the man to see the futility of finding fulfillment or salvation through *doing*, but the man wouldn't see it.

i. He also could not love God more than his wealth, even though Jesus specifically promised him *treasure in heaven*. The man was more interested in man's earthly treasures than in God's heavenly treasures. Essentially, this man was an idolater. Wealth was his God, not the true God of the Bible. He put money first.

e. Then how can we be saved? This man, like all men by nature, has an orientation towards a works-righteousness; he asks **what shall I do**. If we really want to do the works of God, it must begin with believing on Jesus, whom the Father has sent (Joh_6:29).

i. Jesus' purpose wasn't to make the man sad; but he could only be happy by doing what Jesus told him to do. So he **went away grieved**. How many have almost everything, yet are *grieved*!

3. (Mar_10:23-27) The difficulty of riches.

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

a. How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God . . . the disciples were astonished at His words: We are like the disciples; it is hard for us to see how riches would hinder us from the kingdom of God. We think that riches can only bring blessing and good.

i. The words of Jesus amaze the disciples because they assume that wealth is always a sign of God's blessing and favor. After all, if the rich aren't saved, then who is?

ii. Remember what Paul said to Timothy: *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* (1Ti_6:9-10)

b. We often excuse ourselves from what Jesus says here because we don't consider ourselves rich. Yet who among us would not be considered richer than this rich young ruler was?

c. Riches are a snare because they tend to make us satisfied with this life, instead of longing for the age to come; as well, often riches must be acquired at the expense of acquiring God.

i. We may contrast the *dependence* of a child with the *independence* of a rich man - which does Jesus say is more likely to inherit the kingdom of God?

ii. As well - perhaps more importantly - the wealthy man is often a successful *doer*. He has *done well*, so he is rich.

It is very easy for him to think that salvation, and relationship with the Lord is also a matter of successful *doing*, when really it is about humble *receiving*.

d. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God: With man, salvation is like a camel going through the eye of a needle. With God, it is possible.

i. "The camel was the largest animal found on Palestinian soil. The violent contrast between the largest animal and the smallest opening expresses what, humanly speaking, is impossible or absurd." (Lane)

ii. "Attempts have been made to explain Jesus' words about the *camel* and the *eye of a needle* in terms of a camel shuffling through a small postern gate, or by reading *kamilon* 'cable' for *kamelon* 'camel'. Such 'explanations' are misguided. They miss the point that Jesus is using a humourous illustration." (Morris)

e. With God all things are possible: However, God's grace is sufficient to save the rich man; we have the examples of people like Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabas.

4. (Mar_10:28-31) Our reward and the solution to the problem of riches.

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first."

a. **See, we have left all and followed You:** In contrast to the rich young ruler, the disciples *have left all* to follow Jesus; what will be their reward? Why does this question seem so typical of Peter?

i. Of course, there is a special honor for the disciples; they will have a special place in judgment, probably in the sense of administration in the millennial Kingdom. As well, the apostles had the honor of helping to provide a singular foundation for the church (Eph_2:20), and have a special tribute in the New Jerusalem (Rev_20:14).

b. **There is no one who has left house or brothers . . . who shall not receive a hundredfold:** There will be universal honor for all who sacrifice for Jesus' sake. What ever has been given up for Him will be returned to us a many times over, in addition to **eternal life**.

i. **Hundredfold** is obviously not literal; otherwise, Jesus promises us a hundred mothers and a hundred wives.

c. **But many who are first will be last, and the last first:** This is the qualifying remark regarding the apostle's reward. All who sacrifice for the Lord will be rewarded, but God's way and timing of rewarding may not match up with man's way and timing of being rewarded. When God rewards, expect the unexpected.

i. As the text continues in Mat_20:1-16, Jesus teaches the parable of the landowner and the workers - a powerful illustration of God's right and ability to reward in unusual - though never in unfair - ways.

ii. "In the final account, it shall be found that no man has been a loser through giving up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ though he has his own method of deciding who are to be first and who are to be last." (Spurgeon) iii. To anyone who looked, the rich young ruler stood first and the disciples stood last. But God didn't look at it the way man does.

5. (Mar_10:32-34) Jesus again announces His coming fate in Jerusalem.

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

a. **They were amazed . . . they were afraid:** As they drew near to Jerusalem, the disciples sensed the danger of their mission. Jesus was a wanted man, and yet **Jesus was going before them**. Therefore, the disciples **were amazed** at the *courage* of Jesus, and **they were afraid** of the fate awaiting them all in Jerusalem.

i. We sometimes don't think enough about the *courage* of Jesus. It took a tremendous amount of plain bravery for him to walk straight towards His fate at Calvary, and to walk *in front of* the disciples. The courage of Jesus is especially amazing in light of our frequent cowardice as Christians, afraid to "stand out" for Jesus. He wasn't afraid to "stand out" for us.

ii. **As they followed they were afraid:** At the same time, the disciples are to be commended for continuing to follow Jesus. It is true they **were afraid**, but it is also true that **they followed**.

b. **They will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles:** Jesus had already told His disciples that He would be crucified and rise again the third day (Mar_8:31). This is the first time in the Gospel of Mark where Jesus reveals that they will **deliver Him to the Gentiles**. This was an additional insult and betrayal.

i. "Delivery to the Gentiles reveals that Jesus will be held in contempt by his own countrymen, for the Gentiles are the

last people to whom the Messiah of the people of God should be handed over.” (Lane)

c. **And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him:** Significantly, Jesus mentions the *shame* of His suffering. In His death, Jesus suffered the most terrible emotional humiliation, and it was done out of love for us.

i. This sharing in the shame of Jesus marked the early church, and was evidence of their commitment and strength.

Act_5:41 says, *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.* It’s not that the disciples rejoiced in the shame itself, because Jesus didn’t rejoice in the shame itself (Heb_12:2). Instead, they rejoiced in identifying with Jesus, and gladly suffered shame if they had to.

C. True greatness in God’s kingdom.

1. (Mar_10:35-37) James and John request positions of status.

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”

a. **Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory:** Despite the continual declaration of His coming suffering, the disciples are still thinking that when Jesus gets to Jerusalem, He will establish a political kingdom. Here, James and John are asking for positions of high status in Jesus’ administration - which they are certain, will be installed soon!

i. The place of honor is the seat on the right, and next to it, the seat on the left (1Ki_2:19, Psa_110:1). They were asking for the “number one” and the “number two” places in Jesus’ administration.

b. This is no doubt an outgrowth of the continual topic of conversation among the disciples: which one among them was the greatest (Mar_9:33-34). James and John feel confident they will be the greatest, so they ask Jesus to confirm their opinion by appointing them to high positions now.

2. (Mar_10:38-41) Jesus' reply: think in terms of sacrifice, not self-glory.

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared." And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.

a. **You do not know what you ask:** Since James and John still worked under carnal ideas regarding the kingdom of God, they really had no idea what it would take to be great in the kingdom - but not because Jesus hadn't told them!

b. **Are you able to drink the cup that I drink:** As it would turn out, both James and John took the **cup** and were **baptized** in suffering, but they each experienced it in different ways.

i. James was the first apostle to be martyred (Act_12:1-2). According to tradition, John was never martyred, though he survived an attempt to kill him by immersion in a vat of boiling oil (according to reasonably reliable church history).

ii. "In popular Greek usage the vocabulary of baptism was used to speak of being overwhelmed by disaster or danger, and a similar metaphorical use of submersion is present in Scripture." (Lane) Passages like Psa_42:7, Psa_49:3, and Psa_69:2 reflect this idea.

c. **You will indeed drink the cup that I drink:** When Jesus said this, perhaps a big smile came over the face of

James and John. They thought they had won something, and so did the other disciples (**when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John**). However, it is doubtful that Jesus smiled, because He knew what the baptism they asked for was all about.

3. (Mar_10:42-45) Jesus describes true greatness.

But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

a. **Those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them:** Their desire for position and status showed they didn’t know the nature of Jesus yet, in respect to leadership and power. Those who exercise power or authority in the church today as “lording it over” others still don’t understand the Jesus style of leadership and life.

i. **Yet it shall not be so among you** is a stinging rebuke to the manner in which the modern church looks to the world for both its substance and style. Plainly, the church isn’t to operate the way the world does.

b. **Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant:** In the Kingdom community, status, money, popularity are not the prerequisites for leadership. Humble service is the greatest (and only) prerequisite, as displayed by Jesus’ own ministry.

c. **Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve:** Real ministry is done for the benefit of those ministered to, not for the benefit of the minister. Many people are in the ministry for what they can receive (either materially or emotionally) from their people instead of for what they can give.

d. **And to give His life a ransom for many:** This is one of the great claims Jesus made about Himself and His ministry. He is the one who stands in the place of guilty sinners, and offers Himself as a substitute for them.

i. “The ransom metaphor sums up the purpose for which Jesus gave his life and defines the complete expression of his service. The prevailing notion behind the metaphor is that of deliverance by purchase, whether a prisoner of war, a slave, or a forfeited life is the object to be delivered. Because the idea of equivalence, or substitution, was proper to the concept of a ransom, it became an integral element in the vocabulary of redemption in the OT. It speaks of a liberation which connotes a servitude or an imprisonment from which man cannot free himself.” (Lane) 4. (Mar_10:46-52) On the way to Jerusalem, a blind man is healed.

Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.” And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

a. **He cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”** Blind Bartimaeus didn’t have much class, but he did have persistence and determination. People tried to shut him up, but they couldn’t because he really wanted a touch from Jesus

i. The persistent and energetic nature of Bartimaeus' prayer is a good example of prayer. He wasn't discouraged because no one led him to Jesus. He wasn't discouraged by those who told him to stay away.

ii. "Take the gates of heaven and shake them with thy vehemence, as though thou wouldst pull them up post and bar and all. Stand at Mercy's door, and take no denial. Knock, and knock, and knock again, as though thou wouldst shake the very spheres, but what thou wouldst obtain an answer to thy cries. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Cold prayers never win God's ear. Draw thy bow with thy full strength, if thou wouldst send thy arrow up so high as heaven." (Spurgeon)

b. **Have mercy on me!** The blind man knew what he needed from Jesus - **mercy**. He didn't come thinking that God owed him. All he wanted from Jesus is mercy.

c. **What do you want Me to do for you?** Why did Jesus ask this question? Wasn't it obvious? Yet, there was real power in both the asking, and in the answer of Jesus. God may ask us the same question, and we should be able to articulate an answer that glorifies Him.

d. **Rabboni, that I may receive my sight:** The title **Rabboni** "is a strengthened form of 'Rabbi,' and means 'my lord,'

'my master.'" (Lane) When Bartimaeus said this, he expressed his humble submission towards Jesus.

i. The specific nature of Bartimaeus' request is a good example for our prayers. "**Have mercy on me**" is general, but his prayer moved from the general to the specific request, "**that I may receive my sight.**"

ii. "Rest assured that those are the best prayers in all respects, if they be earnest and sincere, which go most directly to the point. You know there is a way of praying in the closet, and praying in the family, in which you do not ask for anything. You say a great many good things,

introduce much of your own experience, review the doctrines of grace very thoughtfully, but you do not ask for anything in particular. Such prayer is always uninteresting to listen to, and I think it must be rather tedious to those who offer it." (Spurgeon)

e. **Go your way; your faith has made you well:** How did the **faith** of the blind man save him? Because it was: • Faith that was determined to reach Jesus (**he cried out all the more**)

- Faith that knew who Jesus was (**Son of David**)
- Faith that came humbly to Jesus (**have mercy on me**)
- Faith that humbly submitted to Jesus (**Rabboni**)
- Faith that can tell Jesus what it wants (**that I may receive my sight**)

f. **Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus:** Blind Bartimaeus, now healed and saved, then **followed Jesus**. The way of Jesus became his way. This is especially significant when we consider where Jesus was going at this time - to Jerusalem to die.

i. First Jesus told Bartimaeus, **go your way**. Then, Bartimaeus **followed Jesus**. He made Jesus' way his own way, and was follower of Him. Bartimaeus must have figured, "Now that I have my sight, I always want to look upon Jesus."

ii. "Apply to the Son of David; lose not a moment; he is *passing by*, and thou art *passing* into *eternity*, and probably wilt never have a more favourable opportunity than the present." (Clarke) (Mar 10:2) Then some Pharisees⁵ came, and to test him⁶ they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his⁷ wife?"⁸

(Mar 10:3) He answered them,⁹ "What did Moses command you?"

(Mar 10:4) They said, "Moses permitted a man *to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce* her."¹⁰

(Mar 10:5) But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this commandment for you because of your hard hearts."¹¹

(Mar 10:6) But from the beginning of creation **he** 12 **made them male and female.**13

(Mar 10:7) **For this reason a man will leave his father and mother,** 14

(Mar 10:8) **and the two will become one flesh.**15 So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

(Mar 10:9) Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

(Mar 10:10) In the house once again, the disciples asked him about this.

(Mar 10:11) So16 he told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

(Mar 10:12) And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."17

(Mar 10:13) **Jesus and Little Children**

Now18 people were bringing little children to him for him to touch,19 but the disciples scolded those who brought them.20

(Mar 10:14) But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.21

(Mar 10:15) I tell you the truth,22 whoever does not receive23 the kingdom of God like a child24 will never25 enter it."

(Mar 10:16) After he took the children in his arms, he placed his hands on them and blessed them.

(Mar 10:17) **The Rich Man**

Now26 as Jesus27 was starting out on his way, someone ran up to him, fell on his knees, and said, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"28

(Mar 10:18) Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good?29 No one is good except God alone.

(Mar 10:19) You know the commandments: ' ***Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.***' "30

(Mar 10:20) The man³¹ said to him, "Teacher, I have wholeheartedly obeyed³² all these laws³³ since my youth."³⁴

(Mar 10:21) As Jesus looked at him, he felt love for him and said, "You lack one thing. Go, sell whatever you have and give the money³⁵

to the poor, and you will have treasure³⁶ in heaven. Then come, follow me."

(Mar 10:22) But at this statement, the man³⁷ looked sad and went away sorrowful, for he was very rich.³⁸

(Mar 10:23) Then³⁹ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

(Mar 10:24) The disciples were astonished at these words. But again Jesus said to them,⁴⁰ "Children, how hard it is⁴¹ to enter the kingdom of God!

(Mar 10:25) It is easier for a camel⁴² to go through the eye of a needle⁴³ than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

(Mar 10:26) They were even more astonished and said⁴⁴ to one another, "Then⁴⁵ who can be saved?"⁴⁶

(Mar 10:27) Jesus looked at them and replied, "This is impossible for mere humans,⁴⁷ but not for God; all things are possible for God."

(Mar 10:28) Peter began to speak to him, "Look,⁴⁸ we have left everything to follow you!"⁴⁹

(Mar 10:29) Jesus said, "I tell you the truth,⁵⁰ there is no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel (Mar 10:30) who will not receive in this age⁵¹ a hundred times as much — homes, brothers, sisters, mothers,

children, fields, all with persecutions⁵² — and in the age to come, eternal life.⁵³

(Mar 10:31) But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

(Mar 10:32) ***Third Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection***

They were on the way, going up to Jerusalem.⁵⁴ Jesus was going ahead of them, and they were amazed, but those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was going to happen to him.

(Mar 10:33) "Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and experts in the law.⁵⁵

They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles.

(Mar 10:34) They will mock him, spit on him, flog⁵⁶ him severely, and kill him. Yet⁵⁷ after three days,⁵⁸ he will rise again."

(Mar 10:35) ***The Request of James and John***

Then⁵⁹ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

(Mar 10:36) He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

(Mar 10:37) They said to him, "Permit one of us to sit at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory."

(Mar 10:38) But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I experience?"⁶⁰

(Mar 10:39) They said to him, "We are able."⁶¹ Then Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I experience, (Mar 10:40) but to

sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give. It is for those for whom it has been prepared."⁶²

(Mar 10:41) Now⁶³ when the other ten⁶⁴ heard this,⁶⁵ they became angry with James and John.

(Mar 10:42) Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them.

(Mar 10:43) But it is not this way among you. Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, (Mar 10:44) and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave⁶⁶ of all.

(Mar 10:45) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom⁶⁷ for many."

(Mar 10:46) ***Healing Blind Bartimaeus***

They came to Jericho.⁶⁸ As Jesus⁶⁹ and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the road.

(Mar 10:47) When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to shout,⁷⁰ "Jesus, Son of David,⁷¹ have mercy⁷² on me!"

(Mar 10:48) Many scolded⁷³ him to get him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

(Mar 10:49) Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So⁷⁴ they called the blind man and said to him, "Have courage! Get up! He is calling you."

(Mar 10:50) He threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

(Mar 10:51) Then⁷⁵ Jesus said to him,⁷⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied, "Rabbi,⁷⁷ let me see again."⁷⁸

(Mar 10:52) Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has healed you." Immediately he regained⁷⁹ his sight and followed him on the road.

(Mar 11:1) ***The Triumphal Entry***

Now¹ as they approached Jerusalem,² near Bethphage³ and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives,⁴ Jesus⁵ sent two of his disciples (Guzik)

Mar 11:1-33

Mark 11 - JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM

A. The triumphal entry.

1. (Mar_11:1-6) Preparation for the entry.

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat.

Loose it and bring *it*. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.

a. **Now when they drew near to Jerusalem:** If all we had were the gospel of Mark, we might think this is Jesus' first journey to Jerusalem. But the gospel of John tells us of many previous trips. Jesus, like any devout Jewish man, went to Jerusalem for as many of the major feasts as He possibly could.

b. **At the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples:** As Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem, He carefully and deliberately sends His disciples to make arrangements for His coming into the city. Since the time is short before His crucifixion, Jesus leaves nothing to chance.

c. **You will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat:** With this, Jesus established that He would enter Jerusalem riding on a **colt**. He deliberately chose a young horse, not a

stallion, not a donkey, not coming on foot. This is because in that day, to come riding a **colt** - as opposed to a mighty war-horse - was to come as a man of peace. Jesus didn't come to Jerusalem as a conquering general, but as a suffering - though triumphant - servant.

i. The Rabbis of Jesus' day had several different theories regarding how the Messiah would come to Jerusalem.

Based on Dan_7:13, some thought the Messiah would come as a majestic conqueror. Based on Zec_9:9, some thought that the Messiah would come in a lowly and humble way, riding on a colt.

ii. In the days of Jesus, some Rabbis reconciled these by saying that the Messiah would come humbly to an *unworthy* Israel, but mightily to a *worthy* Israel. Since Israel considered itself worthy, they only looked for a triumphant, conquering Messiah.

iii. **On which no one had sat:** "To Jesus it made no difference that this was an unbroken colt. He was the Creator come into this scene as a Man, and as such all the lower creatures were subject to Him." (Ironsides)

d. **They spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go:** Apparently, Jesus had pre-arranged this with the colt owner, and the disciples were just instructed to say, "It's for Jesus" if they were questioned. They did as Jesus said, and it was fine.

2. (Mar_11:7-11) Praise for Jesus.

Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed *is* the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked

around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

a. We like this slice from the life of Jesus because it simply *feels* so right. For much of Jesus' ministry, He was despised and rejected of men. Often the adoring crowds followed Him only for what they could *get* from Him, and most His audience rejected any kind of personal commitment to Jesus. It was all different on this day.

i. On this day, they lavished attention and honor on Jesus, using their clothes as a saddle for Jesus, using their clothes as a red carpet for the colt He rode on. Considering the expense and value of clothing in that day, this was generous praise.

ii. If Jesus were among us, would He receive a critical evaluation, or would He receive generous praise? It's even more important to understand that Jesus *is here* among us.

b. **Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"** For most of His ministry, Jesus did everything He could to discourage people from publicly celebrating Him as the Messiah. Here, Jesus goes out of His way to invite public praise and adoration as the Messiah.

i. In fact, when the religious leaders of His day objected, He told them *"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."* (Luk_19:40)

ii. These statements from the crowd come from Psa_118:19-29. In this, their praise was *Scriptural*. It's important that we praise God *as He wants to be praised*. So if God says we are to come to Him with words (Hos_14:2), then that is how we come. If God says we are to come to Him with song (Psa_100:2), that is how we come. If God says we are to come to Him with hands raised up (Psa_134:2), that is how we come. The whole point in worship is to do what pleases God, not what pleases us, but the beautiful truth is that when we please God, we find ourselves wonderfully pleased.

iii. Why did Jesus want to be praised? It was not for His sake; it isn't that Jesus has a self-esteem problem and needs our affirmation. Jesus wants to be praised because *we need* to praise Him. God *will* get His praise, and He invites us to be a part of it.

c. We call this event the "Triumphal Entry," but it was a strange kind of triumph. If you spoke of Jesus' "Triumphal Entry"

to a Roman, they would have laughed you in the face. For them, a Triumphal Entry was a honor granted to a Roman general who won a complete and decisive victory, and had killed at least 5,000 enemy soldiers. When the general returned to Rome, they had an elaborate parade. First came the treasures captured from the enemy, then the prisoners. His armies marched by unit by unit, and finally the general rode in a golden chariot pulled by magnificent horses. Priests burned incense in his honor and the crowds shouted his name and praised him. The procession ended at the arena, where some of the prisoners were thrown to wild animals for the entertainment of the crowd. *That* was a "Triumphal Entry," not a Galilean Peasant sitting on a few coats set out on a pony.

d. **When He looked around at all things:** Jesus came as the Messiah to Jerusalem, not as a mighty general to conquer the Romans. He came to first to look at the standing of the people of God, and to make an "inspection." In the rest of Mark 11, we see the results of this "inspection."

i. Mal_3:1-3 speaks prophetically of the Messiah coming to the temple in careful assessment.

ii. "The point is rather that Jesus is the Lord of the Temple, who must inspect its premises to determine whether the purpose intended by God is being fulfilled." (Lane)

iii. We see again the *courage* of Jesus, because He isn't hiding at all. Joh_11:57 makes it clear that there was a price on Jesus' head; an "all-points-bulletin" was put out for His

arrest. Yet, He came into Jerusalem in the most public way possible.

B. The lesson of the fig tree.

1. (Mar_11:12-14) Jesus curses a fig tree.

Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard *it*.

a. **Seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it:** Essentially, the tree was a picture of "false advertising," **having leaves**, but no figs. Ordinarily, this is not the case with these fig trees, which normally do not have leaves without also having figs.

i. **For it was not the season for figs:** It wasn't that the fig tree didn't have figs, because it wasn't supposed to.

The problem is that it *had leaves* but didn't have figs. The leaves said "There are figs here," but the figs weren't there.

ii. There were many trees with only leaves, and these were not cursed. There were many trees with neither leaves nor fruit, and these were not cursed. This tree was cursed because it professed to have fruit, but did not.

b. **In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again"** : The tree is cursed for its *pretense* of leaves, not for its *lack* of fruit; like Israel, it has the outward form but no fruit. In this picture, Jesus warned Israel - and us - of God's displeasure when we have the *appearance* of fruit, but not the fruit itself. God isn't pleased when His people are all leaves and no fruit.

i. In all works in the ministry of Jesus, this is the only "destructive" miracle. The Old Testament is filled with miracles of destruction and judgment, but Jesus most perfectly showed us the nature of God. If this was the only

miracle of its kind, we must see there is a great and important lesson in it. God doesn't approve when there is profession without reality, talk without walk.

ii. Should we criticize Jesus for a lack of environmental concern? Not at all. "There is no more warrant for criticizing our Lord for destroying a tree for the purpose of teaching, that there is for objecting to a Christmas tree for our children, or the plucking of petals from a flower in a lesson on botany." (Morgan)

3. (Mar_11:15-19) The temple cleansed.

So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'?

But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city.

a. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple:

What was the problem? Profiteers, in cooperation with the priests, robbed the pilgrims by forcing them to purchase "approved"

sacrificial animals and currencies at inflated prices.

i. Every Jewish male had to pay a yearly temple tax - an amount equaling about two days pay. It had to be paid in the currency of the temple, and the money exchangers would change you your money for the temple money, and they did it at outrageous rates.

b. As well, they did this in the outer courts of the temple, the only area where Gentiles could come and pray; therefore, this place of prayer was made into a swap meet, and a

dishonest one at that! God intended the temple to be a **house of prayer for all nations**, but they had made it a **den of thieves**.

i. **A den of thieves** is a place where **thieves** associate and hide. It is a sorry, shameful condition when the house of God becomes a place where unrepentant, active sinners can associate and hide.

c. We do love Jesus; and we want to praise Him; yet we must also allow His cleansing presence in our lives. If He wants to turn over some tables in our hearts, so be it.

4. (Mar_11:20-24) Return to the cursed fig tree.

Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*."

a. **Have faith in God:** Jesus explains that this miracle was really the result of a prayer made in faith, and He encourages His marveling disciples to have this kind of faith, trusting that God will hear them also.

b. **In God:** Jesus makes it clear: prayer must be offered in faith, and faith must be **in God**, not "just there" or "faith in faith." Faith is trust, confidence, and reliance upon someone or something.

c. Some, using Greek transliterations, have said Jesus was really saying that we must "*Have God's faith*." What do the Greek scholars say?

ii. "Objective genitive *theou* [God] as in Gal_3:26; Rom_3:22; Rom_3:26." (Robertson) God is *object* of faith in this sentence.

iii. "The word 'God' is in the genitive case, showing here the object of faith." (Wuest)

iv. "Faith *in* God, genitive objective as in Rom_3:22 and Heb_6:2." (Expositor's) v. The grammatical *case* of the word **God** in this passage is the objective genitive. The *objective case* refers to what *receives* the action of the verb *have*; it is not in a *possessive* case, which would indicate that we are to "have God's faith."

c. **Whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed" : Mountain** was a popular figure of speech for any insurmountable problem; Jesus is saying, as we believe, God can overcome any obstacle.

i. "The phrase about removing mountains was a quite common Jewish phrase. It was a regular, vivid phrase for *removing difficulties*." (Barclay)

ii. This promise of God's answer to the prayer made in faith is made to disciples, not to the multitude. "Nor should we interpret Mar_11:24 to mean, 'If you pray hard enough and *really believe*, God is obligate to answer your prayer no matter what you ask.' That kind of faith is not faith in God; rather it is nothing but faith in faith, or faith in feelings." (Wiersbe)

d. If Jesus had the power to curse the tree this way, didn't He have the power to make fruit miraculously appear on the tree? Of course; but Jesus often wants to do a *cooperative* work.

5. (Mar_11:25-26) Prayer and forgiveness.

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

a. **Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him:** A lack of faith is not the only obstacle to effective prayer. A lack of forgiveness and bitterness can also hinder our prayer.

i. The point may also be that this is an area where we need great faith. Sometimes a hard and unforgiving heart is bigger than any mountain.

b. Therefore, we are never to place religious duty or ministry ahead of good relationship with people - if **you stand praying and you have anything against anyone**, set it right - then continue on in prayer.

i. We are to do what Paul commanded in Rom_12:18 : *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

c. **If you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses:** The forgiven heart will forgive others. If we have hard, unforgiving hearts, it calls into question if we have ever received or appreciated the forgiveness God offers us.

i. "This is not an arbitrary refusal by God to forgive us. We in our own unforgiving spirit have made it impossible for ourselves to accept the forgiveness freely offered by God since we refuse to adopt the only attitude in which it can be appropriated." (Cole)

C. By what authority?

1. (Mar_11:27-28) The religious leaders question Jesus.

27Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. 28And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?"

a. **As He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him:** Jesus wasn't looking for these great debates with the religious leaders. He wanted to teach the people and tell them about God's good news. But the questioners came to Him, and He was more than able to handle them.

b. **By what authority are You doing these things?** Jesus has been extremely courageous by boldly entering Jerusalem and driving out the corrupt merchants from the

temple courts. Now **the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders** want to know what right He thinks He has to do such things.

i. This is a great question for today: “Who are you to tell us what to do?” In today’s world, no one wants to be told what to do and the question the authority of anyone who tells them what to do. However, we should all recognize and submit to *God’s* authority to tell us what to do.

2. (Mar_11:29-33) Jesus answers their question with a question.

29But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: 30The baptism of John; was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.” 31And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 32But if we say, ‘From men’”; they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. 33So they answered and said to Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

a. **I will also ask you one question:** When Jesus asked them to answer the question regarding John the Baptist, He was not evading their question because if John was from God, then he was right about Jesus, that He was the Messiah. If what John said was true, then Jesus had all authority.

i. “It was not a dodge, but a home thrust that cleared the air and defined their attitude both to John and Jesus.

They rejected John as they now reject Jesus.” (Robertson)

ii. “The Lord’s question was not a trap; it was yet another opportunity for them to realize and confess their blindness, and ask for sight.” (Cole)

b. **We do not know:** Their response to His question exposed the fact that these men were not sincere seekers of truth.

They cared more about scoring rhetorical points in debate and in pleasing the crowds than in knowing the truth.

i. "The whole story is a vivid example of what happens to men who will not face the truth. They have to twist and wriggle and in the end get themselves into a position in which they are so helplessly involved that they have nothing to say." (Barclay) It is more difficult at first to face the truth and admit wrong, but it the only path with a real *future*.

c. If we ask Jesus to give us answers, we must deal rightly with the truth that is already revealed. These men knew that John said Jesus was the Messiah, and were not willing to even deal with that.

(Mar 11:2) and said to them, "Go to the village ahead of you.⁶ As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there that has never been ridden.⁷ Untie it and bring it here.

(Mar 11:3) If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it⁸ and will send it back here soon.' "

(Mar 11:4) So⁹ they went and found a colt tied at a door, outside in the street, and untied it.

(Mar 11:5) Some people standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"

(Mar 11:6) They replied as Jesus had told them, and the bystanders¹⁰ let them go.

(Mar 11:7) Then¹¹ they brought the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks¹² on it, and he sat on it.¹³

(Mar 11:8) Many spread their cloaks on the road and others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

(Mar 11:9) Both those who went ahead and those who followed kept shouting, " ***Hosanna!*** ¹⁴ ***Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*** ¹⁵

(Mar 11:10) Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! *Hosanna* in the highest!"

(Mar 11:11) Then¹⁶ Jesus¹⁷ entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. And after looking around at everything, he went

out to Bethany with the twelve since it was already late.
(Mar 11:12) ***Cursing of the Fig Tree***

Now¹⁸ the next day, as they went out from Bethany, he was hungry.

(Mar 11:13) After noticing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, he went to see if he could find any fruit¹⁹ on it. When he came to it he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

(Mar 11:14) He said to it,²⁰ "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.²¹

(Mar 11:15) ***Cleansing the Temple***

Then²² they came to Jerusalem.²³ Jesus²⁴ entered the temple area²⁵ and began to drive out those who were selling and buying in the temple courts.²⁶ He turned over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, (Mar 11:16) and he would not permit anyone to carry merchandise²⁷ through the temple courts.²⁸

(Mar 11:17) Then he began to teach²⁹ them and said, "Is it not written: ' ***My house will be called a house of prayer for all***

nations'?³⁰ But you have turned it into ***a den 31 of robbers***!"³²

(Mar 11:18) The chief priests and the experts in the law³³ heard it and they considered how they could assassinate³⁴ him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed by his teaching.

(Mar 11:19) When evening came, Jesus and his disciples³⁵ went out of the city.

(Mar 11:20) ***The Withered Fig Tree***

In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

(Mar 11:21) Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered."

(Mar 11:22) Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God.

(Mar 11:23) I tell you the truth,³⁶ if someone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

(Mar 11:24) For this reason I tell you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

(Mar 11:25) Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will³⁷ also forgive you your sins."³⁸

(Mar 11:26) *(TEXT OMITTED)*

(Mar 11:27) ***The Authority of Jesus***

They came again to Jerusalem.³⁹ While Jesus⁴⁰ was walking in the temple courts,⁴¹ the chief priests, the experts in the law,⁴²

and the elders came up to him

(Mar 11:28) and said, "By what authority⁴³ are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do these things?"

(Mar 11:29) Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question. Answer me and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: (Mar 11:30) John's baptism — was it from heaven or from people?⁴⁴ Answer me."

(Mar 11:31) They discussed with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?'

(Mar 11:32) But if we say, 'From people — ' " (they feared the crowd, for they all considered John to be truly a prophet).

(Mar 11:33) So⁴⁵ they answered Jesus,⁴⁶ "We don't know."⁴⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you⁴⁸ by what authority⁴⁹ I am doing these things."

(Mar 12:1) ***The Parable of the Tenants***

Then¹ he began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard.² He put a fence around it, dug a pit for its winepress, and built a watchtower. Then³ he leased it to tenant farmers⁴ and went on a journey.

(Guzik)

Mar 12:1-44

Mark 12 - JESUS DEBATES THE AUTHORITIES

A. The story of the tenant farmers.

1. (Mar_12:1-8) A parable about a landowner and his tenants.

Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around *it*, dug a *place for* the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took *him* and beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed *him* and cast *him* out of the vineyard."

a. **He leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country:** This sort of tenant farming relationship was a common practice in Jesus' day, especially in the region of Galilee. Archaeologists have discovered records of this same sort of dispute between landowners and tenant farmers.

i. "In a day when title was sometimes uncertain, anyone who had had the use of land for three years was presumed to own it in the absence of an alternative claim." (Morris)

b. That he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers: Because Jesus spoke to a Jewish audience, they were be aware that the vineyard is used in the Old Testament as a picture of Israel (Isa_5:1-7).

Therefore, the **vinedressers** represent the rulers of Israel and the vineyard represents the people of God as a whole.

c. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed: The vinedressers didn't buy the vineyard, and did they make it. A generous owner allowed them to work in his vineyard, yet they turned against the owner, and one day had to answer for it.

i. Again he sent them another servant . . . And again he sent another . . . and many others: How patient the owner is! He sends messenger after messenger, even though they are all abused and mistreated. How many messengers of God have we rejected?

ii. Because the owner of the vineyard was not present right at the time, the vinedressers doubted and mocked his authority. They would find out soon enough that even though they couldn't see the owner, his authority was still real. When we think God is too distant to really exert His authority, we will be proven just as wrong.

iii. This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours: How foolish the vinedressers are! They apparently thought that if they killed the owner's son, then the owner would just give up and let them have the vineyard.

d. So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard: This parable tells us that Jesus knew He was the Son - the Son of God - and that He knew that He would be killed soon.

i. The Son was the final messenger. There would be no other. Either they would accept the message of the Son, or face certain judgment. "If you do not hear the wellbeloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. *He is God's ultimatum*. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can

be sent; heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ be rejected, hope is rejected.” (Spurgeon)

2. (Mar_12:9-12) Jesus applies the parable.

“Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.

Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?” And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

a. **Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do?**

The vinedressers were foolish enough to think that if they only killed the owner’s son, the vineyard would be theirs. Jesus draws the correct point - they rejected messenger after messenger, finally rejecting the Son, so their day of reckoning will come (**He will come and destroy the vinedressers**).

b. **Have you not even read this Scripture:** Jesus instructs them from the “Hosanna Psalm” (Psa_118:22-28), because the Messiah has been officially presented to Israel. The hostility of the Jewish leaders shows that He is being rejected, even if He was initially greeted with hosannas quoting from Psalms 118.

c. **The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone:** Jesus is often likened unto a stone or a rock in the Bible. He is the rock of provision that followed Israel in the desert (1Co_10:4). He is the stone of stumbling (1Pe_2:8). He is the stone cut without hands that crushes the kingdoms of this world (Dan_2:45).

d. **They knew He had spoken the parable against them:** They were cut to the heart, and convicted by the Holy Spirit. They reacted to the conviction of the Holy Spirit by *rejecting*, not by *receiving*. They plotted to murder Jesus instead of repenting before Him.

B. God and Caesar.

1. (Mar_12:13-15 a) The Pharisees try to trap Jesus with a question about taxes.

Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in *His* words. When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?”

a. **They sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words:** Public opinion kept them from laying hold of Jesus, so now they try to turn the tide of public opinion against Him. Using a clever question, they want to make Jesus appear to side with the Roman government against the Jews.

i. We again see **the Pharisees and the Herodians** working together (last time was in Mar_3:6). Former enemies come together because of Jesus, but it is because they both *oppose* Jesus and want to destroy Him.

b. **Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth:** Jesus knew enough to not regard this flattery from His enemies. Sometimes our enemies flatter us because they want to hurt us. Sometimes our friends flatter us because they want to be kind and helpful.

Either way, it is a mistake to put too much stock in what others say about us, either good or bad.

i. Charles Spurgeon said to pastors, “It is always best not to know, nor wish to know, what is being said about you, either by friends or foes. Those who praise us are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse us.” Benjamin Franklin said, “The Devil sweetens poison with honey.”

ii. “Here is a fair glove drawn upon a foul hand . . . There are those who will smile in your face, and at the same time cut your throat.” (Trapp)

c. **Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?** Since the year 6 A.D. the Jews were forced to pay taxes directly into the emperor's treasury. Some Jewish patriots (like the Zealots) refused to pay this tax, because they did not want to recognize Roman rule as legitimate. Most others grudgingly paid it, but everybody hated it. It wasn't just the *money*, but also the *principle* of paying your Roman oppressor.

i. There were three taxes imposed by the Romans on Judea. The first was the *ground tax*, which was 10% of all grain and 20% of all wine and fruit. The second was the *income tax*, which amounted to 1% of a man's income. The third was the poll tax, paid by men aged from 12 to 65 and women from 14 to 65. This was one denarius a year, about a day's wage for a working man.

ii. "It is important to appreciate the emotional trauma which pervaded the issue of the tribute money ever since it had first been imposed on the Roman province of Judea in A.D. 6." (Lane)

d. **Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?** They seemed to put Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If He agreed the tax should be paid, then Jesus seemed to deny the sovereignty of God over Israel, and He would lose popular support. If Jesus agreed that the tax should not be paid, He would openly declare Himself an enemy of Rome, and be treated like a revolutionary.

i. We can almost see the smug, self-satisfied smiles of the Pharisees and the Herodians as they skillfully threw this question on Jesus. They thought they put Him in a classic "no-win" situation, *but you can't put Jesus in a no-win situation.*

2. (Mar_12:15-17) Jesus answers the question about taxes. But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see *it*." So they brought *it*.

And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription *is* this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at Him.

a. **Why do you test Me?** We should never say that Jesus taunted His adversaries in an ungodly way, but He did let them know that they could never win against Him.

b. **Bring Me a denarius that I may see it:** On the denarius they showed to Jesus, there would be a head of Tiberius, the reigning Roman Emperor. Around his head was written the abbreviation for “Tiberius Caesar, the Divine Augustus.”

On the back was the title “Pontifex Maximus,” declaring Caesar the “high priest of the Roman Empire.”

i. As Jesus held the coin, He knew the government of Caesar would soon pierce His hand and crucify Him - and He still said, “pay your taxes.”

c. **Whose image and inscription is this?** Essentially, Jesus said “You recognize Caesar’s civil authority when you use his coins, therefore you are obliged to pay him the taxes he asks for.”

i. “There is a world of bitterness in the terseness of their one-word reply, *Caesar’s*.” (Cole) d. **Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s:** If we take advantage of the benefits of governmental rule, we are obliged to submit to government, as long as it does not infringe on our service to God. Simply said, Jesus tells us to pay our taxes. The Apostle Paul repeated the same idea in Rom_13:6-7.

i. “Jesus is saying that we are citizens of heaven and earth at the same time.” (Morris)

ii. Had the Jews rendered God His due, they would have never had to render Caesar anything - the fact that they were under Roman domination was due to their own departure from the Lord.

e. **And to God the things that are God's:** Just as it is important to **render to Caesar**, we must also render **to God the things that are God's**. The coin belonged to Caesar because his image was stamped on it. We should give ourselves to God because His image is stamped on us.

i. Give the coin to Caesar, but give your life to God. It may be fitting for you to die for your country, but only God is worth living for.

ii. Jesus' answer tells us that Caesar does not have all authority; there are things that should be rendered to God alone. When the State treads on this ground that belongs to God, we are duty bound to obey God before the State.

iii. "This answer is full of consummate wisdom. It establishes the *limits*, regulates the *rights*, and distinguishes the *jurisdiction* of the two *empires* of *heaven* and *earth*."

(Clarke) f. **And they marveled at Him:** They marveled, but they did not change. In fact, they twisted this wise answer of Jesus into a lying accusation against Him. In Luk_23:2, they accused Jesus of *forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar* - when He actually said just the opposite!

i. Sometimes it doesn't matter how good an answer you give; some people will still twist your good words. They did this to Jesus, yet God's truth prevailed. In the answer of Jesus, God is *glorified*, Caesar is *satisfied*, the people are *edified*, and His critics are *stupefied*.

C. A question about the resurrection.

1. (Mar_12:18-23) The Sadducees ask Jesus a ridiculous question.

Then *some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves *his* wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had

her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."

a. In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? The **Sadducees** were well educated, sophisticated, influential and wealthy. They did not believe in immortality, spirits or angels. With their question, they wanted to make the idea of resurrection seem absurd.

i. Morris on the Sadducees: "They were the conservative, aristocratic, high-priestly party, worldly minded and very ready to cooperate with the Romans, which, of course, enabled them to maintain their privileged position."

ii. The Law of Moses (in Deu_25:5-6) established something that came to be called *levirate marriage*, from the Latin word *levir*, meaning "brother-in-law." Essentially, the practice made sure that if a married man died childless, his brother had to take the widow as a wife so a son and heir could be provided for the deceased man, and his family name and inheritance would not perish.

iii. Ironside said this question was "An imaginary tale designed to cast ridicule upon the doctrine of resurrection."

b. Now there were seven brothers: Their question is absurd; it is similar to asking, "how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?" or "did Adam have a belly-button?" An absurd question isn't less absurd because we direct the question to God.

i. The Sadducees believed that when the body died, the soul died. The Bible not only tells us that the soul lives on when the body dies, but that the soul will be given a new body, a body fit for eternity - a resurrection body.

2. (Mar_12:24-25) Jesus corrects their misunderstanding about resurrection life.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?

For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

a. **Are you not therefore mistaken:** The Sadducees thought that if there was a resurrection, it was just this same life lived forever. With the principle **when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage**, Jesus shows that in the age to come our lives will be lived on a completely different principle, in a dimension that we can’t imagine.

i. Many people make the same mistake as the Sadducees when it comes to their ideas about heaven. They think of heaven as just a glorious version of earth. So the American Indian thinks of heaven as the “happy hunting ground.”

The ancient Viking things of heaven as Valhalla, where they fight as warriors all day and at the end of the day all the dead and wounded rise whole again, and the celebrate all night at a banquet, drinking wine from the skulls of their enemies. All this mistakes heaven for just a “better” earth. Heaven’s life is of a different order all together.

b. **Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?** Jesus explains *why* the Sadducees had wrong ideas about resurrection. Their wrong thinking came from *ignorance* (**you do not know**) of both **the Scriptures** and **the power of God**.

i. When we don’t know **the Scriptures**, we don’t have an anchor for truth and belief.

ii. When we don’t know **the power of God**, we doubt God’s ability to actually do what He has promised in the Scriptures.

iii. “The Sadducees posed as men of superior intelligence and knowledge in opposition to the traditionalists among the Pharisees . . . and yet on this very point they were ignorant of the Scriptures.” (Robertson) Many today who are regarded as intelligent become dull when it comes to Jesus.

c. They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven: We can't take our present relationships and just figure they will be the same in heaven. On earth, human relationships are largely a matter of time and place - a man can be a son, then an adult, then a husband, then a father, and so on. In heaven, all that changes.

i. From everything we know, angels don't have babies. Angels are made directly by God. In the resurrection, we won't have babies any more. In that respect, we will be just like the angels. "Marriage ceases to have any sexual significance in heaven." (Cole)

i. We know it won't be the same as what we know on earth, but we can't say for sure what it will all be like in heaven - other than to know that we won't be disappointed.

ii. Knowing the resurrection of the dead is true doesn't answer all of our questions. There are mysteries that remain, but they don't take away from the basic truth of the resurrection.

3. (Mar_12:26-27) Jesus proves the resurrection from the Scriptures.

"But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I *am* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

a. Concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read: Jesus assures the skeptical Sadducees that there is indeed a resurrection of the dead, that they do rise, and that this is demonstrated by the Scriptures.

i. "He has already explained what He meant by their ignorance of God's power; now He will explain what He meant by their ignorance of the Scripture." (Cole)

ii. The Sadducees said they believed in the Bible, but they said the true Bible only contained the first five books of the

Old Testament. That is one reason why Jesus proved the resurrection from this passage in Exodus 3, one of the books of the Bible the Sadducees said was genuine.

b. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not continue to live, God would not say that He *is* their God, speaking in the present tense. He would have to say that He *was* their God. Therefore, the Scriptures prove there is a resurrection of the dead.

4. (Mar_12:28-34) Which is the greatest commandment?

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments *is*: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD

our God, the LORD is one. 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it*, *is* this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these." So the scribe said to Him, "Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

a. Which is the first commandment of all? With this question, they tested Jesus to see if He would show disregard or neglect for some area of the Law of Moses. Instead of promoting one command over another, Jesus gives defines the law in its essence: love God with everything you have and love your neighbor as yourself.

b. Love the LORD your God . . . love your neighbor as yourself: In this we see that what God really wants from man is **love**. We can obey God without loving Him, but if we do love Him obedience will follow.

i. Jesus said this was the **first of all the commandments**.

- It is the first commandment in regard to age. Before Adam and Eve had any other command, they were commanded to love the Lord their God who created them

- It is the first commandment in regard to priority. Every other act of obedience is empty if we do not love God first

c. To love Him with all . . . and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices: The scribe's response to Jesus was right on the mark. It is easy to think that religious ceremony and devotion are more important than love for God and our neighbor, but this isn't the case. A thousand empty burnt offerings are not more to God than a single act of love done in His name.

D. Jesus questions, warns, and commends.

1. (Mar_12:35-37) Jesus asks a question: how can the Messiah be both the *Son of David* and the *Lord* of David?

Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, "How *is it* that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?

For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He *then* his Son?" And the common people heard Him gladly.

a. How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? Since Jesus is the Christ, here He speaks of Himself. With the questions of the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees to Jesus, they tried to make Him look bad or trap Him. Jesus did not do the same in His questions to them; instead He got to the heart of the matter: "do you really know who I am?"

i. These religious leaders thought they knew just about everything there was to know about the Messiah. Jesus is challenging this notion, and He asks them to consider that they may have something to learn.

b. **David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?** Jesus is not only the *Son of David* He is also the **Lord** of David. As Rev_22:16 says, He is *both the root and offspring of David*. With this question Jesus challenges the religious leaders, asking them “do you understand this truth about the Messiah?”

2. (Mar_12:38-40) Jesus warns about the hypocrisy of the scribes.

Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, *love* greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

a. **Beware of the scribes:** The **scribes** were the “Bible Scholars” of Jesus’ day. They were entrusted with preserving, learning, and teaching the Word of God to the world. These are the men that the people of God should have been able to trust, but Jesus says instead they should **beware of the scribes**. The scribes represent a complete contrast to the picture of how a disciple should be - as a servant, as a child, as one carrying a cross. Jesus says that we should notice what they do as well as what they say.

i. **Beware the scribes**, because they like to wear their **long robes**. The scribes were men of leisure, who watched while others work.

ii. **Beware the scribes**, because they **love greetings**. They demand recognition from others in their walk with God, and love the “image” of a holy man.

iii. **Beware the scribes**, because they love **the best seats in the synagogue** and at **feasts**, showing they demand the “perks” of status and privilege.

iv. **Beware the scribes**, because they **devour widows' houses**. They sin against the weak and vulnerable, but excuse it because they are so "spiritual." In that day, a Jewish teacher could not be *paid* for teaching - but he could receive "gifts." Apparently, many scribes used flattery and manipulation to wrangle big gifts from those who could least afford to give them - such as widows. The Jews of Jesus' day taught that teachers were to be respected almost as much as God; they said that they deserved more honor and respect than any other people in life. They taught that the greatest act someone could do is give money to a teacher. Of course, it was the teachers themselves who taught this!

v. **Beware the scribes**, because they **for a pretense make long prayers**. Their relationship with God is far more show than substance. The scribes thought they were more spiritual because of their long prayers; but Morgan says that when a man is away from his wife, and the journey is short, the letters are short. The farther he is from his wife, the longer the letters become. Morgan said that some people must be a long way from God because their prayers are so long!

b. **These will receive a greater condemnation**: As in Mar_6:11, Jesus presents the idea of a **greater condemnation** - that some will receive a worse judgment, a worse condemnation, than others will.

3. (Mar_12:41-42) Jesus observes the widow's giving.

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much.

Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

a. **Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury**: The sight of this poor widow must have been a welcome sight to a weary Jesus, after enduring a storm of questions from His enemies.

i. The line at the offering box, and the pride shown by the rich men in their giving shows us that it isn't necessarily more spiritual to just have an offering box instead of passing offering bags. It isn't a matter of right and wrong, but a matter of which is an easier way for people to give in a way that doesn't call attention to their gift.

b. **Saw how the people put money into the treasury:** Jesus looks at us when we give and He notices how much we give. As Jesus looks, He is more interested in **how** we give than in *how much* we give.

i. In seeing **how** the people gave, Jesus wasn't studying technique. He was looking at motive and heart.

c. **Many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came in and threw in two mites:** Jesus noticed a long line of rich people who put in a lot of money, perhaps making some kind of display to call attention to their gift. The **one poor widow** was different, and offered **two mites**.

i. How much was **two mites**? Mark tells us that **two mites** make one **quadrans**. Matthew Poole says that we can calculate the value of a mite based on the value of a denarius, which was the going rate of one day's labor for a working man. According to Poole's calculations, a denarius equals six meahs; one meah equals two pondions; one pondion equals two issarines; one issarine equals eight mites. When you figure it all out, two mites are 1% of a denarius. A mite was pretty small - perhaps our equivalent of putting \$1 in the collection plate.

ii. A **quadrans** was a Roman coin. Mark is helping his Roman readers to understand how much a mite was worth.

It wasn't worth much.

iii. The ancient Greek word *lepton* literally means "a tiny thing," and so in the Old English was translated *mite*, which comes from the word for a "crumb" or "very small morsel."

d. **Two mites:** The wonderful thing about this widow's giving is that she had **two mites** and gave them both. She

might have kept one coin for herself, and who would blame her if she did? Instead, she gave with staggering generosity.

4. (Mar_12:43-44) Jesus assesses the widow's gift.

So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

a. **This poor widow has put in more than all those who have given:** Jesus did not say that she put in more than *any one* of them; He said that she put in more than **all** of them - all of them put together!

i. **This poor widow:** In the ancient Greek, the idea is "emphatic - the poverty-stricken; manifest from her dress and wasted look." (Robertson)

b. **They all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had:** This explains how Jesus could say that the widow **put in more than all**. It was because all the others gave out of **their abundance** but she gave sacrificially.

i. Jesus' principle here shows us that a gift's value is determined by the *spirit* in which it is given; God doesn't want grudgingly given money, or guilt money. God loves the cheerful giver.

ii. The widow's gift and Jesus' comment on it also shows us that the value of a gift is determined by what it *cost* the giver; this is what made the widow's gift so valuable. David refused to give God *that which cost me nothing* (2Sa_24:24).

iii. Jesus' principle here shows us that God does not *need* our money. If God needed our money, then *how much* we give would be more important than our *heart* in giving. Instead, it is *our* privilege to give to Him, and we need to give because it is good for us, not because it is good for God.

c. **Out of her poverty:** Why was the woman poor? Because she was a widow and had no husband to help support her. It

also may be significant that Jesus just criticized the scribes as those *who devour widow's houses*. Now a lone widow makes a spectacular contribution - had her house been devoured by a scribe?

i. The widow challenges the mindset that says, "I'll give when I have more." The widow had virtually nothing, yet was a giver. This means that we can all please God with our giving just as much as the richest man can please God with his giving. Whatever we give sacrificially to God, He sees it and is pleased.

ii. "I do not think a collection is ever taken but that somewhere He finds a copper coin, and kisses it into gold."
(Morgan)

iii. There is a sense in which may have looked at the widow and saw Himself. He would soon offering everything He had in humble sacrifice on the cross. Jesus didn't hold back His "two mites."

(Mar 12:2) At harvest time he sent a slave⁵ to the tenants to collect from them⁶ his portion of the crop.⁷

(Mar 12:3) But⁸ those tenants⁹ seized his slave,¹⁰ beat him,¹¹ and sent him away empty-handed.¹²

(Mar 12:4) So¹³ he sent another slave to them again. This one they struck on the head and treated outrageously.

(Mar 12:5) He sent another, and that one they killed. This happened to many others, some of whom were beaten, others killed.

(Mar 12:6) He had one left, his one dear son.¹⁴ Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

(Mar 12:7) But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours!'

(Mar 12:8) So¹⁵ they seized him,¹⁶ killed him, and threw his body¹⁷ out of the vineyard.¹⁸

(Mar 12:9) What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy¹⁹ those tenants and give the vineyard to others.²⁰

(Mar 12:10) Have you not read this scripture:

' The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. 21

(Mar 12:11) **This is from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"22**

(Mar 12:12) Now²³ they wanted to arrest him (but they feared the crowd), because they realized that he told this parable against them.

So²⁴ they left him and went away.²⁵

(Mar 12:13) **Paying Taxes to Caesar**

Then²⁶ they sent some of the Pharisees²⁷ and Herodians²⁸ to trap him with his own words.²⁹

(Mar 12:14) When they came they said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are truthful and do not court anyone's favor, because you show no partiality³⁰ but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.³¹ Is it right³² to pay taxes³³ to Caesar³⁴ or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

(Mar 12:15) But he saw through their hypocrisy and said³⁵ to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius³⁶ and let me look at it."

(Mar 12:16) So³⁷ they brought one, and he said to them, "Whose image³⁸ is this, and whose inscription?" They replied,³⁹ "Caesar's."

(Mar 12:17) Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."⁴⁰ And they were utterly amazed at him.

(Mar 12:18) **Marriage and the Resurrection**

Sadducees⁴¹ (who say there is no resurrection)⁴² also came to him and asked him,⁴³

(Mar 12:19) "Teacher, Moses wrote for us: '**If a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, that man 44 must**

marry 45 the widow and father children 46 for his brother.'⁴⁷

(Mar 12:20) There were seven brothers. The first one married,⁴⁸ and when he died he had no children.

(Mar 12:21) The second married her and died without any children, and likewise the third.

(Mar 12:22) None of the seven had children. Finally, the woman died too.

(Mar 12:23) In the resurrection, when they rise again,⁴⁹ whose wife will she be? For all seven had married her."⁵⁰

(Mar 12:24) Jesus said to them, "Aren't you deceived⁵¹ for this reason, because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God?

(Mar 12:25) For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels⁵² in heaven.

(Mar 12:26) Now as for the dead being raised,⁵³ have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush,⁵⁴ how God said to him, ' **I am the God of Abraham, the 55 God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**'?⁵⁶

(Mar 12:27) He is not the God of the dead but of the living.⁵⁷ You are badly mistaken!"

(Mar 12:28) **The Greatest Commandment**

Now⁵⁸ one of the experts in the law⁵⁹ came and heard them debating. When he saw that Jesus⁶⁰ answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

(Mar 12:29) Jesus answered, "The most important is: ' **Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.**

(Mar 12:30) **Love 61 the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**'⁶²

(Mar 12:31) The second is: ' **Love your neighbor as yourself.**'⁶³ There is no other commandment greater than

these."

(Mar 12:32) The expert in the law said to him, "That is true, Teacher; you are right to say that **he is one, and there is no one else besides him.**⁶⁴

(Mar 12:33) And **to love him with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength** ⁶⁵ and **to love your**

neighbor as yourself ⁶⁶ is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

(Mar 12:34) When Jesus saw that he had answered thoughtfully, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Then no one dared any longer to question him.

(Mar 12:35) **The Messiah: David's Son and Lord**

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he said, "How is it that the experts in the law⁶⁷ say that the Christ⁶⁸ is David's son?⁶⁹

(Mar 12:36) David himself, by the Holy Spirit, said,

' The Lord said to my lord, ⁷⁰

" Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet. " ⁷¹

(Mar 12:37) If David himself calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?"⁷² And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

(Mar 12:38) **Warnings About Experts in the Law**

In his teaching Jesus⁷³ also said, "Watch out for the experts in the law.⁷⁴ They like walking⁷⁵ around in long robes and elaborate greetings⁷⁶ in the marketplaces, (Mar 12:39) and the best seats in the synagogues⁷⁷ and the places of honor at banquets.

(Mar 12:40) They⁷⁸ devour widows' property,⁷⁹ and as a show make long prayers. These men will receive a more severe punishment."

(Mar 12:41) ***The Widow's Offering***

Then⁸⁰ he⁸¹ sat down opposite the offering box,⁸² and watched the crowd putting coins into it. Many rich people were throwing in large amounts.

(Mar 12:42) And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins,⁸³ worth less than a penny.

(Mar 12:43) He called his disciples and said to them, "I tell you the truth,⁸⁴ this poor widow has put more into the offering box⁸⁵ than all the others.⁸⁶

(Mar 12:44) For they all gave out of their wealth.⁸⁷ But she, out of her poverty, put in what she had to live on, everything she had."⁸⁸

(Mar 13:1) ***The Destruction of the Temple***

Now¹ as Jesus² was going out of the temple courts, one of his disciples said to him, "Teacher, look at these tremendous stones and buildings!"³

(Guzik)

Mar 13:1-37

Mark 13 - THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

A. The destruction of the temple and its implications.

1. (Mar_13:1-2) Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple.

Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!* " And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

a. **Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!** The disciples seem like tourists amazed at the sites of the city of Jerusalem. They had good reason to be amazed, because the temple compound, as remodeled by Herod the Great, was one of the magnificent

structures of the ancient world. The Jewish people were justifiably proud of this great building.

i. This temple was originally rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Ezra (Ezr_6:15), but greatly expanded and improved by Herod. It was the center of Jewish life for almost a thousand years - so much so, that it was customary to swear by the temple (Mat_23:16), and speaking against the temple could be considered blasphemy (Act_6:13).

ii. After Herod's work, the temple was huge - nearly 500 yards long and 400 yards wide. Herod's rebuilding started in 19 B.C., and was not completed until 63 A.D., taking more than eighty years. The magnificent temple compound was finished only seven years before it was destroyed.

iii. The beauty of the ancient temple is well documented. The Jewish historian Josephus says that the temple was covered on the outside with gold plates that were so brilliant that when the sun shone on them it blinded any observer. Where there wasn't gold, there were blocks of marble of such a pure white that strangers, from a distance, thought there was snow on the temple.

iv. The comment of the disciples - **see what manner of stones and what buildings are here** - is especially appropriate given the massive stones Herod used in building the temple. Today, tourists can see some of these massive stones, at least the ones used to build merely *the retaining wall* for the temple compound. These cut, quarried blocks of limestone are so big - some are 50 feet wide, 25 feet high, and 15 feet deep - that *modern* construction cranes could not lift them. Archaeologists are still not completely certain how these stones were cut, transported, and placed with such precision that they don't even need mortar.

v. As great as the temple was, Jesus never hesitated to claim that He was greater than the temple (Mat_12:5). For many Jews of that day, the temple had become an idol - it subtly began to mean more to the people than God Himself meant. The temple was a good thing, but good things can become

the worst idols; and sometimes God sours even good things that we allow to become our idols. God is in the habit of destroying our idols.

b. Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down: Some 40 years after Jesus said this, there was a widespread Jewish revolution against the Romans in Palestine, and the rebels enjoyed many early successes.

But ultimately, Rome crushed the Jews. Jerusalem was leveled, including the temple - just as Jesus said.

i. It is said that at the fall of Jerusalem, the last surviving Jews of the city fled to the temple, because it was the strongest, most secure building in the city. Roman soldiers surrounded it, and one drunken soldier started a fire that soon engulfed the whole building. Ornate gold detail work in the roof melted down in the cracks between the stone walls of the temple, and to retrieve the gold, the Roman commander ordered that the temple be dismantled stone by stone. The destruction was so complete that today, they have true difficulty learning exactly where the temple was.

ii. “Now, as soon as the army had no more people to kill or plunder . . . Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple . . . this was the end which Jerusalem came to.” (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 7.1.1) Interestingly, Josephus tells us that the Romans never *intended* to destroy the temple, but were driven to it by the fierceness of Jewish opposition and by accident. (*Wars of the Jews*, 6.4) c. The literal fulfillment of this prophecy establishes the tone for the rest of the prophecies in the chapter. We should expect a literal fulfillment for these other prophecies also.

2. (Mar_13:3-4) Jesus’ prediction brings up two questions in the minds of His disciples.

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, “Tell us,

when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

a. **As He sat on the Mount of Olives:** The **Mount of Olives** is a hill that rises above the temple mount. In between the temple mount and the **Mount of Olives** there is a small valley, the Kidron Valley. You can stand on the **Mount of Olives** and have see a dramatic view of the temple mount.

b. **Tell us, when will these things be?** As Jesus sat with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, they could see the majestic structure of the temple. With this view, the first question in the mind of the disciples was about the destruction of the temple. Jesus said it would be destroyed, and they wanted to know when. Mark does not record Jesus’ answer to this first question, but Luke does in Luk_21:8-23.

c. **What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?** The second question is answered in the remainder of Mark 13.

i. This question was asked perhaps as they remembered the events surrounding the last temple’s destruction: the temple was destroyed in the context of national judgment and exile. If the temple will be destroyed, then what will become of Israel and the Jews?

B. The flow of history until Jesus’ return.

1. (Mar_13:5-8) Jesus describes general world conditions during the period between His Ascension and the time immediately preceding His Second Coming.

And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’

and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.”

a. **Take heed that no one deceives you:** Jesus points out the trial that can come to His followers from false messiahs, who come in His **name**. They will pretend to be Jesus, or representatives of Jesus, but will not be true representatives of Jesus at all.

b. **Wars and rumors of wars:** Jesus reminds us that before He returns, there will be many wars and threats of war on the earth. In troubled times, many people assume that the end of the age is near but Jesus said that **wars and rumors of wars** are not signs of the end.

i. "Our Lord's outlook upon this age was not that of one in which there should be a gradual cessation of strife between the nations, by the victory of the preaching of His Gospel, until the whole earth should be reduced by that preaching to a condition of peace." (Morgan)

c. **Such things must happen, but the end is not yet:** Things such as false messiahs, **wars, famines** and **earthquakes** have certainly marked man's history since the time of Jesus' Ascension. In effect, Jesus is saying, "Catastrophes will happen, but these do not signal the end."

i. Man has often thought that such things would mean the end, but Jesus will point out a more specific sign to look for.

ii. It's plain that Jesus intended His followers to *endure through* such times. Could they shake your faith? Would a war, a famine, a earthquake, or some other catastrophe shake your faith?

d. **These are the beginning of sorrows:** Jesus said these calamities were not *specific* signs of the end, but that they were **the beginning of sorrows**, which is literally *the beginning of labor pains*. The idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and perhaps implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities.

2. (Mar_13:9-13) Jesus describes what His disciples must expect during the time between His Ascension and Second Coming.

“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake.

But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

a. **Watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils:** Jesus tells His disciples to be prepared for the persecution that will come against them before the end comes. This persecution is not the sign of the end, but simply should be expected.

b. **The gospel must first be preached to all the nations:** But Jesus also promises that before the end, the gospel must go out to the whole world. The presence of persecution does not relieve the Church of this responsibility.

c. **When they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak:** Jesus tells His followers to not worry about what to say when they are “put on the spot” for being a follower of Jesus. At that moment, the Holy Spirit will give them words to say.

i. A powerful example of this principle is found in Act_4:1-22, where Peter and the other disciples make a dramatic proclamation of Jesus before the hostile Sanhedrin.

ii. Jesus speaks here of the inspiration that comes at a moment of persecution, not teaching in the church. “There is no excuse for the lazy preacher who fails to prepare his sermon out of the mistaken reliance upon the Holy Spirit.”

(Robertson)

d. **Brother will betray brother death:** The followers of Jesus should expect the most painful kinds of rejection and betrayal as they seek to stand strong for Jesus.

i. It is easy for us to underestimate how difficult a time of persecution can be. Inside this building, I can easily say, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

- If I came from an orthodox Jewish family, they might consider me a blasphemer and account me as dead for choosing Jesus.

- If I came from a strict Muslim family, I might be rejected by my family and be literally killed for choosing Jesus.

- If I came from a Hindu family in India, I could be rejected and martyred for choosing Jesus.

- In China, I would be allowed to practice Christianity only in the state-sponsored church - or be persecuted.

My church might be one of the 1,500 destroyed or shut down since November of 2000.

- In Sudan, I might be killed or literally enslaved by a Muslim army.

- In Indonesia, I might be given a choice by Muslims: convert to Islam or die, or I might have my church bombed during a worship service.

- In Pakistan I might be jailed by Muslim government officials.

ii. According to David B. Barrett in his book *Today's Martyrs*, some 165,000 Christians died for their faith in the year 2000. Researchers estimate that since the Day of Pentecost, more than 43 million Christians have been killed for their faith. A persecution index provided by Open Doors with Brother Andrew lists 28 countries with strong or even massive persecution. In another 23 countries Christians suffer discrimination and in some regions severe harassment.

iii. Knowing how Christians have stood for Jesus during the centuries, and how our brothers and sisters are being

persecuted all over the world, what kind of a stand to we make for Jesus? Do we advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ with our “leftovers”?

e. **He who endures to the end shall be saved:** **Endures** translates the ancient Greek word *hupomeno*, which literally means to “remain under.” When trials and persecution are swirling about, we can’t be so desperate for an escape that we will compromise. Instead, we must *remain under*.

C. The sign of His coming and the end of the age.

1. (Mar_13:14 a) The sign: The abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel.

“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not” (let the reader understand), a. The mention of the **abomination of desolation** is taken from Dan_11:31 : *They shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.* This describes a complete desecration of the temple, prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanies in the time between the Old and New Testaments.

i. This Antiochus desecrated the temple in Jerusalem in a horrible way. “He desecrated the Temple by offering swine’s flesh on the great altar and by setting up public brothels in the sacred courts. Before the very Holy Place itself he set up a great statue of the Olympian Zeus and ordered the Jews to worship it.” (Barclay) As bad as this was, it did not fulfill the **abomination of desolation**, because Jesus said these words long *after* Antiochus did this.

ii. The Hebrew word translated **abomination** in Dan_11:31 is *shikkoots*. It appears in the Old Testament 29 times, and it has the idea of a filthy, disgusting idol. However, this is more than just an idol. First, it is an idol set in the holy place of the temple in Jerusalem - **standing where it ought not**, and as Matthew puts it, *standing in the holy place* (Mat_24:15). Second, this is a filthy, disgusting idol that

brings **desolation** - the complete and devastating judgment of God.

iii. It is important to point out that this is not merely an idol in set in the Jewish temple. Passages like Jer_7:30, Jer_32:34, and Eze_5:11 describe abominable idols in the temple - but they are not the **abomination** that brings **desolation**.

iv. Something nearly like this happened in 40 A.D. when Caligula was the Emperor of Rome. He was a madman and decided to set up a statute of himself in the holy place of the temple in Jerusalem. He sent the statue by ship on its way down to Jerusalem, but he died before it arrived and they never set it up.

b. Essentially, the **abomination of desolation** speaks of the ultimate desecration of a Jewish temple, an idolatrous image in the holy place itself, which will inevitably result in the judgment of God. It is the **abomination** that brings **desolation**.

i. The **abomination of desolation** is “the object of religious nausea and loathing who has to do with desolation.”

(Wuest) “The Semetic expression used in Daniel describes an abomination so detestable it causes the Temple to be abandoned by the people of God and provokes desolation . .

. Jesus use of this distinctive expression, however, indicates that the prophecy was not ultimately fulfilled by the events of the Maccabean period.” (Lane) ii. Paul elaborates on the future fulfillment of this in 2Th_2:3-4 : *That day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

iii. Dan_12:11 gives additional insight: *And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be 1,290 days* (until the end). When this sign is set up, the end may be determined -

almost three and one-half years to go before the triumphant return of Jesus to this earth.

iv. This is not a new understanding of the **abomination of desolation**. An early Christian writer named Irenaeus, wrote this in the late second century: “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom.”

c. When Jesus describes the **abomination of desolation**, there is the presupposition of an operating temple in Jerusalem. You can’t have the **abomination of desolation** without a temple.

i. For centuries, there was only a small Jewish presence in Judea and Jerusalem. Their presence in the region was definite and continuous, but small. It is unthinkable that this weak Jewish presence could rebuild a temple.

Therefore the fulfillment of this prophecy was highly unlikely until Israel was gathered as a nation again in 1948.

The restoration of a nation that the world had not seen for more than 2,000 years is a remarkable event in the fulfillment and future fulfillment of prophecy.

ii. One of the more fascinating developments in recent history is the focus of Jewish and Arab conflict over the temple mount, where a rebuilt temple must stand. There is a small but dedicated group of Jews who are passionately committed to rebuilding the temple. Today you can visit the Temple Institute in the Jewish Quarter of the old city in Jerusalem. There, a group of Jews absolutely dedicated to rebuilding the temple attempt to educate the public and raise awareness for a new temple. They are trying to replicate everything they can for a new temple, down to the specific pots and pans used for sacrifice.

iii. Israel is a nation again, and efforts to rebuild the temple are for real. The main Jewish group leading the charge to rebuild the temple is an organization called *Faithful of the Temple Mount*, who say they will continue their efforts to re-establish the Jewish temple on the Mount. One leader in the group said, "We shall continue our struggle until the Israeli flag is flying from the Dome of the Rock." In Israel, there are students being trained for the priesthood, learning how to conduct animal sacrifices in the rebuilt temple.

iv. It is important to understand that most Jews - religious or secular - do not care one bit about building a temple.

And if there were one rebuilt, sacrifice would be difficult in a day of aggressive animal rights activists! Yet, there is a small, strong, highly dedicated group who live to see a rebuilt temple - a temple that will fulfill prophecy.

v. Rightly, Christians get excited when they see efforts to rebuild the temple. At the same time, we should understand that the basic impulse behind rebuilding the temple is not of God at all - the desire to have a place to sacrifice for sin. Christians believe that all sacrifice for sin was finished at the cross, and any further sacrifice for sin is an offense to God, because it denies the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

d. In a sense, Jesus tells us nothing new here. He simply calls us back to what was prophesied in Daniel. The comment **let the reader understand** could have been said by Jesus Himself and not written by Mark.

e. Some say that **the abomination of desolation** was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed, and that this ties in with the destruction of the temple promised in Mar_13:2. This interpretation must spiritualize Mar_13:19-27, which says that Jesus will return in glory soon after the **abomination of desolation**.

i. F.F. Bruce rightly notes: "While Josephus mentions the sacrifices offered by the victorious Romans to their legionary standards in the Temple court, he does not describe this

action as an abomination, whatever he may have thought privately.” (*New Testament History*, page 383)

2. (Mar_13:14-18) Jesus warns what should be done when the abomination of desolation appears: get out of there!

“Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter.”

a. **Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains:**

Jesus directs this warning to the Jewish people. This is evident in His specific mention of **Judea** and of **the housetop** (a common feature of architecture in both ancient and modern Judea). To the citizens of Judea, Jesus says: “When you see the abomination of desolation established, flee because trouble is coming.”

i. These words of Jesus have led some to believe that everything Jesus speaks of here was fulfilled in the first century, in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. It is true that this exhortation by Jesus was taken literally by Christians in 66 A.D. when Roman armies first came to Jerusalem. At that time, Christians fled to the mountains and were spared the great destruction of 70 A.D. However, Jesus also said that these events would bring in the Great Tribulation (Mar_13:19) and that those days would culminate in the triumphant return of Jesus

(Mar_13:26-27). Since we’re still here 2,000 years later, we know that the abomination of desolation wasn’t fulfilled in the first century.

ii. These words of Jesus have led some to believe that all Christians - the church as a whole - will go through this time known as the Great Tribulation, and that this warning must be for us. However, Jesus promised to catch His people up from the earth and meet them in the air (1Th_4:16-18), and told us to pray that would be counted worthy to escape this

time (Luk_21:36) and promised to keep His faithful from the time of judgment that would come upon the earth (Rev_3:10). Jesus gave this warning primarily as a specific, amazing prophecy of events thousands of years before they happened, so the Jewish people during the days of the abomination of desolation would have a unique witness to Jesus and His Word.

b. The warning is *urgent*: **let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes**. This is consistent with other passages of Scripture, which promise great persecution against the Jewish people during the Great Tribulation (Rev_12:13-17).

3. (Mar_13:19-23) Coming on the heels of the abomination of desolation: great **tribulation**.

“For *in* those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, *He is* there!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.”

a. **Tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation . . . nor ever shall be**: Jesus said that this will be the most awful time in all of human history. When we consider the massive calamities humanity has suffered through the centuries, this is a terribly sobering statement. The Book of Revelation describes this terrible time when God pours out His wrath on a God-rejecting world.

i. In 1343 bubonic plague started to sweep across Europe. Over eight years, two-thirds of the population of Europe was afflicted with the plague, and half of those afflicted died - an

almost incredible total of 25 million people. This time of **tribulation** will be worse.

ii. Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-first Century* (1993) sets the number of “Lives deliberately extinguished by politically motivated carnage” at between 167 million and 175 million. Most other statisticians are in the same ballpark. Yet, Jesus said that this time of **tribulation** will be worse.

b. **Unless the Lord had shortened those days:** If the terrors of the great tribulation were to continue indefinitely, mankind could not survive - so, **for the elect’s sake**, the days will be limited.

c. **Then if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Christ!” or, “Look, He is there!” do not believe it:** No one should be deceived about the nature of Jesus’ coming. It will not be secret or private, and it won’t be a “different” Jesus. In the midst of such tribulation, men will be tempted to fall for false messiahs.

d. **But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand:** Jesus told this to all His followers as a warning, so they would **take heed**. It isn’t just for those who come to faith in Jesus during the Great Tribulation. It isn’t just for those who live at the end of the age. It is for everyone to **take heed**.

i. We live in a cynical age, when people are naturally distrustful and pessimistic when it comes to promises. In the 1970’s there was great emphasis on the return of Jesus and being ready for His return. It is easy in our cynical age to think, “I’ve been waiting for 30 years and Jesus still hasn’t come. I don’t need to be so ready, and so worked up over something that might not happen for another 30 or 300 years.”

ii. It is easy to sympathize with that way of thinking - but Jesus told us **take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand**. He has reasons why He wants you to **take heed**, anticipating and being ready for His soon return:

- It has a purifying effect in our lives
- It gives us a sense of urgency
- It makes us bold in speaking to the lost
- It helps us keep a light touch on the things of this world

iii. We should also remember that God has reason for the time He has established. If Jesus caught up His church to meet Him in the air in 1978, how many would have missed the rapture? If He returned in glory seven years later in 1985, how many of us would have gone through the Great Tribulation? We can all see the time is close; any extended time - "injury time" - is pure grace to allow more to come in before the horrific events Jesus described in the Great Tribulation.

iv. Think of it this way: if a person woke every morning and said, "Jesus is coming soon and I have to live like He is coming soon" would it make their life better or worse?

4. (Mar_13:24-27) On the heels of great tribulation: the return of Jesus Christ.

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."

a. **In those days, after that tribulation:** Jesus says that the cosmic catastrophes He describes here happen **in those days**, the days connected with **that tribulation**.

b. **The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall:** Immediately before the return of Jesus, before His **coming in the clouds with great power and glory**, the world will be wracked by cosmic catastrophes. In a sense, this is the groaning of all creation (Rom_8:22) and it will come to one last crescendo before the return of Jesus.

i. This kind of cosmic calamity is described in many Old Testament passages: Isa_13:9-11, Eze_32:7-9, Joe_2:30-31, Amo_8:9-10, Zep_1:14-15.

c. **He will send His angels, and gather together His elect:** When Jesus returns to this earth **after that tribulation**, He will come *with* the saints in heaven and to **gather** those who have come to Jesus during the **tribulation** and have survived.

5. (Mar_13:28-31) Jesus speaks more regarding the timing of these events.

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near; at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

a. **Now learn this parable from the fig tree:** The **fig tree** has a regular pattern - the leaves appear, then summer follows. When you see the leaves, you know **summer is near**. In the same way, when these signs - particularly the abomination of desolation - appear, the world can know that the triumphant return of Jesus is **near; at the doors**.

i. This is just as Daniel prophesied in Dan_12:11 : the end *will come* 1,290 days after the abomination of desolation.

In this, Jesus assures that the agonies of the great tribulation will not continue indefinitely; they will have an end.

Song of Son_2:11-13 makes mention of this: the blossoming of the fig tree shows winter is past and summer is near.

ii. “In contrast to most of the trees of Palestine . . . the fig loses its leaves in the winter, and in contrast to the almond, which blossoms very early in the spring, the fig tree shows signs of life only later.” (Lane) iii. This was the perfect illustration at this time and place. Jesus taught this on the Mount of Olives, and “The Mount of Olives was famous for its fig trees, which sometimes attained a height of 20 or 30

feet.” (Lane) It was also the perfect time, because Jesus taught this right before Passover, when fig trees were in the condition described in the parable - branches tender, leaves sprouting.

b. This generation will be no means pass away till all these things take place: What **generation** does Jesus refer to? It cannot be the **generation** of the disciples, because they did not see the triumphant return of Jesus. It is undoubtedly the **generation** that sees these signs - especially the abomination of desolation. These events and Jesus’

return won’t be on some 1,000-year timetable, but will happen in succession.

i. It is also possible that the word **generation** can be understood as a *race* or *people*. This may be a promise that the Jewish race will not perish before history comes to a conclusion.

c. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away: Jesus’ makes the amazing claim of uttering eternal words. Is this not enough to establish His claim to deity?

6. (Mar_13:32-37) The emphasis: be ready; watch.

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. *It is* like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming; in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

a. That day and hour no one knows: This means that we must **take heed**, because we face the danger of being unprepared.

i. **Nor the Son, but only the Father:** How could Jesus *not* know that day and hour? Did not He, as God, know all things? Jesus did not know this, but it was not because He gave up His omniscience - He is unchanging God. It was because He voluntarily, in submission to the Father, restricted His knowledge of this event.

b. **Take heed, watch:** We must **watch**. Anyone who watches is not caught by surprise. People are not ready because they fail to **watch**. The emphasis couldn't be more clear: ·

Of that day and hour no one knows (Mar_13:32)

·

You do not know when the time is (Mar_13:33)

·

You do not know when the master of the house is coming (Mar_13:35)

i. Some people have the idea, "We don't know when Jesus is coming, so it doesn't really matter." Others have the idea, "We don't know when Jesus is coming, so we have to find out and set a date." The right response is, "I don't know when Jesus is coming so I have to be alert, eager, and ready for His coming."

ii. Because we do not know when, we must watch. The English name *Gregory* comes from this Greek word translated *watch* - the ancient Greek word *gregoruo*. Perhaps every time we meet someone named *Gregory* or *Greg* we should be reminded to **watch**.

iii. "The more the master is expected, the more diligent ought the servants to be in working, watching, and keeping themselves in readiness. Can one who has received the sentence of death, and has no right to live a moment, need any admonition to prepare to die? Does not a prisoner who

expects his deliverance hold himself in continual readiness to leave his dungeon?" (Clarke)

c. **Take heed . . . pray:** We must **pray**, that we may be found worthy to *escape all these things that will come to pass* (Luk_21:36). The good news in Jesus is that we don't have to go through this calamity that will come. He will take from the earth as many as are ready to go before this calamity begins.

i. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. those who listened to and obeyed Jesus escaped the horrible destruction that came upon the city. When it comes to the far greater destruction that will come upon the whole earth, those who listen to and obey Jesus can escape the horrible destruction that will come.

d. **It is like a man going to a far country:** Jesus speaks now to His followers about how they should live *until* He comes. Jesus is like the **man going to a far country**, who left three things to his servants: **his house**, his **authority**, and **his work**. The traveling man also appoints a **doorkeeper** to keep watch. He may return at any time, and does not want to find his servants sleeping. The point of it all: **Watch!**

i. "The Parable of the Fig Tree cautions Tribulation saints to watch and know the 'signs of the times.' But the Parable of the Householder warns *all of us today*." (Wiersbe)

ii. Think of what Jesus has left you:

·
His house: The church belongs to Jesus, but He entrusts it to each one of us · His **authority:** We are to live and serve in the **authority** of Jesus, and *responsibility* is always coupled with **authority** ·

His work: Each servant has **his work** to do. We aren't responsible for someone else's work, but we certainly are responsible for ours

iii. "There is some evidence to show that the simile of the *porter*, or door-keeper, is peculiarly apt and indeed a chosen simile for the Christian ministry." (Cole) We must listen to the warning of the **doorkeeper - watch** and be ready. Until Jesus returns, it is time to be about our Father's business.

iv. "The *porter* represents the *ministers* of his Gospel, who should continually watch for the safety and welfare of the whole flock." (Clarke) (Mar 13:2) Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left on another.⁴ All will be torn down!"⁵

(Mar 13:3) ***Signs of the End of the Age***

So⁶ while he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John,⁷ and Andrew asked him privately, (Mar 13:4) "Tell us, when will these things⁸ happen? And what will be the sign that all these things are about to take place?"

(Mar 13:5) Jesus began to say to them, "Watch out⁹ that no one misleads you.

(Mar 13:6) Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,'¹⁰ and they will mislead many.

(Mar 13:7) When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. These things must happen, but the end is still to come.¹¹

(Mar 13:8) For nation will rise up in arms¹² against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in

various places, and there will be famines.¹³ These are but the beginning of birth pains.

(Mar 13:9) ***Persecution of Disciples***

"You must watch out for yourselves. You will be handed over¹⁴ to councils¹⁵ and beaten in the synagogues.¹⁶ You will stand before governors and kings¹⁷ because of me, as a witness to them.

(Mar 13:10) First the gospel must be preached to all nations.

(Mar 13:11) When they arrest you and hand you over for trial, do not worry about what to speak. But say whatever is given you at that time,¹⁸ for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

(Mar 13:12) Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise against¹⁹ parents and have them put to death.

(Mar 13:13) You will be hated by everyone because of my name.²⁰ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.²¹

(Mar 13:14) ***The Abomination of Desolation***

"But when you see *the abomination of desolation* ²² standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee²³ to the mountains.

(Mar 13:15) The one on the roof²⁴ must not come down or go inside to take anything out of his house.²⁵

(Mar 13:16) The one in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.

(Mar 13:17) Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing their babies in those days!

(Mar 13:18) Pray that it may not be in winter.

(Mar 13:19) For in those days there will be suffering²⁶ unlike anything that has happened²⁷ from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, or ever will happen.

(Mar 13:20) And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved. But because of the elect, whom he

chose, he has cut them²⁸ short.

(Mar 13:21) Then²⁹ if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!'³⁰ or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe him.

(Mar 13:22) For false messiahs³¹ and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect.

(Mar 13:23) Be careful! I have told you everything ahead of time.

(Mar 13:24) ***The Arrival of the Son of Man***

"But in those days, after that suffering,³² *the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; (Mar 13:25) the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*³³

(Mar 13:26) Then everyone³⁴ will see *the Son of Man arriving in the clouds* ³⁵ with great power and glory.

(Mar 13:27) Then he will send angels and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.³⁶

(Mar 13:28) ***The Parable of the Fig Tree***

"Learn this parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.

(Mar 13:29) So also you, when you see these things happening, know³⁷ that he is near, right at the door.

(Mar 13:30) I tell you the truth,³⁸ this generation³⁹ will not pass away until all these things take place.

(Mar 13:31) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.⁴⁰

(Mar 13:32) ***Be Ready!***

"But as for that day or hour no one knows it — neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son⁴¹ — except the Father.

(Mar 13:33) Watch out! Stay alert!⁴² For you do not know when the time will come.

(Mar 13:34) It is like a man going on a journey. He left his house and put his slaves⁴³ in charge, assigning⁴⁴ to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to stay alert.

(Mar 13:35) Stay alert, then, because you do not know when the owner of the house will return — whether during evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or at dawn —

(Mar 13:36) or else he might find you asleep when he returns suddenly.

(Mar 13:37) What I say to you I say to everyone: Stay alert!"

(Mar 14:1) ***The Plot Against Jesus***

Two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the chief priests and the experts in the law¹ were trying to find a way² to arrest Jesus³ by stealth and kill him. (Guzik)

Mar 14:1-72

Mark 14 - JESUS' BETRAYAL, ARREST, AND TRIAL

A. Preparations for death.

1. (Mar_14:1-2) The rulers resolve to kill Jesus.

After two days it was the Passover and *the Feast* of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put *Him* to death. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."

a. **After two days it was the Passover:** The *time* is significant, because at **Passover** not only was there a great expectation of the Messiah, but Jerusalem was also crowded with these Messiah-expecting multitudes. Since Passover remembered the time when God raised up a great deliverer and freed Israel from foreign oppression, it was a time of great patriotic and messianic anticipation. The Romans were on guard and ready for anything.

i. Every possible preparation was made for the Passover. For a month ahead of time, the meaning of Passover was

explained in each synagogue and Jewish school, so that no one would be unprepared. As pilgrims streamed into Jerusalem, they noticed that every tomb near a road was painted with fresh whitewash, so they would know where the tombs were and would not accidentally defile themselves by brushing against a tomb.

ii. Every male Jew who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem *had* to come to Jerusalem for Passover, but many more came from great distances - including Galilee. Many people who heard and saw Jesus in the region of Galilee were here, with great respect and great expectation regarding Jesus.

iii. The feasts of **Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread** were held right next to each other. "In popular usage the two festivals were merged and treated for practical purposes as the seven-day 'feast of the Passover.'"

(Lane)

b. **How they might take Him by trickery:** As the **chief priests and the scribes** plot the murder of an innocent man, it shows that they do not fear God. Nevertheless, they do fear the people (**lest there be an uproar of the people**).

These religious leaders are not afraid to murder the Son of God; they just believe they must do it in a politically wise way.

c. **Not during the feast:** The religious leaders did not *want* to kill Jesus during the Passover feast, but they ending up doing it then anyway. This clearly shows that Jesus is in command and though the leaders act according to the evil inclination of their hearts, their actions will fulfill prophecy and the plan of Jesus.

i. From Joh_11:57 it seems that the religious leaders originally intended to seize Jesus during the feast. When they saw the popularity of Jesus at the triumphal entry and His authority on the temple mount, they changed their mind and decided to try *after* the feast. Their plan changed again when Judas volunteered to arrange a private, quiet arrest.

2. (Mar_14:3) What the woman did: Jesus is anointed with perfume.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured *it* on His head.

a. **A woman came:** John's account of this incident (Joh_12:1-8) tells us that this was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

i. This isn't the same as when sinful woman brought the alabaster box with ointment, broke it and anointed Jesus' feet. That occasion was precious, but it was different in that the woman was overwhelmed with her own sense of sinfulness and adoration to her pardoning Lord. Mary seems focused on Jesus alone, not even on her own forgiven sin. It is a great thing to love Jesus for all He has done for us; it can be greater still to love Him simply for who He is in all His wonder and majesty.

b. **Having an alabaster flask of very costly oil:** This was an extravagant display of devotion to Jesus. Often spices and ointments were used as investments because they were small, portable, and could be easily sold.

i. "Early in the first century Pliny the Elder remarked that 'the best ointment is preserved in alabaster.' The value of the perfume, and its identification as nard, suggests that it was a family heirloom that was passed on from one generation to another, from mother to daughter." (Lane)

c. **She broke the flask and poured it on His head:** The **flask** was a small bottle with a thin neck and the bottle was opened by breaking the neck of the bottle. Mark's wording indicates that she poured the entire contents of the bottle on Jesus' head.

i. When a guest arrived for a meal, it was customary to anoint the guest's head with a dab of oil. Here, this **woman** goes much farther than the customary greeting. She

poured the entire contents of an **alabaster flask of very costly oil** on the head of Jesus.

ii. This was a wonderful, perceptive act of Mary. Jesus just rode into Jerusalem as a King - shouldn't kings be anointed? Mary understood this, but the disciples didn't.

iii. She never could have done this through someone else. "Sister Martha, I want to give this perfume to Jesus, but I'm a little busy. Can you break this flask and anoint His head with oil?" The *cost* of the gift would then be the same in a financial sense, but never the same in the sense of true love and devotion. She had to do it *herself*. Our love and devotion to Jesus must be expressed *personally*.

iv. Mary did this without a word. We gather that her sister Martha was quite the talker, but Mary was a doer. She didn't announce what she was going to do, and she didn't describe it as she did it, nor did she explain it after she did it. She simply did it.

v. "If we could all *do* more and *talk* less it might be a blessing to ourselves at least, perhaps to others. Let us labor in our service for the Lord to be more and more hidden; as much as the proud desire to catch the eye of man, let us endeavor to avoid it."

d. When Mary was finished, she didn't look to the disciples and ask their opinion of what she did.

i. "You should rise above such idle dependence upon man's opinion; what matters it to you what your fellow-servant thinks? To your own Master you stand or fall. If you have done a good thing do it again. You know the story of the man who comes riding up to the captain, and says, 'Sir, we have taken a gun from the enemy.' 'Go and take another,' said the matter-of-fact officer. That is the best advice which I can render to a friend who is elated with his own success. So much remains to be accomplished that we have no time to consider what has been done."

(Spurgeon)

3. (Mar_14:4-9) The reaction to what the woman did.

But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, “Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, “Let her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

a. **Some who were indignant:** Joh_12:1-8 tells us that it was specifically Judas who was indignant about the expense. His indignation was entirely self-serving; Joh_12:6 tells us, *This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.*

i. **They criticized her sharply:** It’s easy to criticize those who show more love to Jesus than we do. We sometimes want to define a “fanatic” as someone who is more devoted to Jesus than we are.

ii. Judas may have started the criticism, but he wasn’t alone for long. Mark makes it clear that **they criticized her sharply**. Each one looked at the oil on Jesus’ head and considered it **wasted**. We can imagine that Mary started to wonder if she did something wrong.

iii. Even the most prominent followers of our Lord can be wrong, and it must have stung the woman to hear Judas - so respected among the disciples - to openly criticize her. Nevertheless, she made no effort to defend herself, but simply loved Jesus and let Him do the defending.

iv. “It is interesting that the word translated ‘waste’ in Mar_14:4 is translated ‘perdition’ in Joh_17:12 *and applied to Judas!* Judas criticized Mary for ‘wasting money,’ but he

wasted his entire life!" (Wiersbe) b. This particular **alabaster flask** seems to have been worth more than a year's wages for a laborer (*three hundred denarii*). "I shall always feel obliged to Judas for figuring up the price of that box of costly nard. He did it to blame her, but we will let his figures stand, and think the more of her the more he put down to the account of waste. I should never have known what it cost, nor would you either, if Judas had not marked down in his pocket-book." (Spurgeon) c. **Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me:** The disciples thought that this extravagant anointing with oil was a waste, but Jesus received it as a **good work**. With her simple love and devotion to Jesus, Mary understood what the disciples did not - that Jesus was about to die, and she intended this gift as a preparation for his **burial**.

i. **She has done a good work:** "In the Greek there are two words for *good*. There is *agathos* which describes a thing which is morally good; and there is *kalos* which describes a thing which is not only good by *lovely*. A thing might be *agathos*, and yet be hard, stern, austere, unattractive. But a thing which is *kalos* is winsome and lovely, with a certain bloom of charm upon it." (Barclay) ii. Jesus gives her the highest compliment: **she has done what she could**. God expects no *more* from us than what we can do; but beware of setting your sights so low that you believe that doing *nothing* is doing what you *can*.

"There can be no higher commendation than this. All cannot do great things for Christ, but it is well if each one does what he can as unto the Lord Himself." (Ironsides)

d. **She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial:** Mary's act was all the more precious because it was *planned* (**she has come beforehand**). This wasn't a spontaneous, "seized by the moment" kind of action. It was carefully planned **beforehand**.

i. Apparently, Mary listened and believed the teaching of Jesus in a way that the other disciples simply didn't.

When He said that He would be delivered into the hands of wicked men and mocked and scourged and crucified, she believed it. She said, "If my precious Jesus will be mocked and tortured like this, then allow me to give Him some special honor."

ii. It seems that the disciples did not want to think about the death of Jesus. When Peter heard of it, he tried to talk Jesus out of it. Mary had a different devotion, and instead of debating or denying His death, she turned it into an occasion of deep devotion.

iii. "Nothing puts life into men like a dying Savior. Get you close to Christ, and carry the remembrance of him about you from day to day, and you will do right royal deeds. Come, let us slay sin, for Christ was slain. Come, let us bury all our pride, for Christ was buried. Come, let us rise to newness of life, for Christ has risen. Let us be united with our crucified Lord in his one great object - let us live and die with him, and then every action of our lives will be very beautiful." (Spurgeon)

e. **Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world:** Jesus knew He was going to die, but He did not waver in confidence one bit - He also knew He would rise from the dead that **this gospel** would be **preached in the whole world**.

f. **As a memorial to her:** The disciples longed for fame and influence, but this woman is the one who finds an enduring memorial. She found it not by longing for a position, but simply by loving Jesus and serving Him.

i. There is a tendency within us all to look at this story and to say, "I love Jesus also. Tell me what I should do to show it." But part of the woman's great love was displayed in the fact that *she* came up with the idea to express her love for Jesus in this way. If there was a command to do this, it could never have been this precious. "'Oh,' cries a brother, 'tell me what

I could do for Jesus!’ Nay, but, brother, I must not tell you. The better part of the whole matter will lie in the hallowed ingenuity of your spirit in inventing something for him out of your own fervent soul.”

(Spurgeon)

ii. **As a memorial to her:** In the Kidron Valley of Jerusalem, laying between the Mount of Olives and the Temple Mount, there is a spectacular tomb carved out of solid rock. They call it “Absalom’s Tomb,” but they know it came from around the time of Jesus, not the time of David and his son Absalom - so they know Absalom is not buried there, but no one knows who is. A very wealthy man thought to make a lasting *memorial* to himself, and he is forgotten to time and history; this woman with her simple and profound act of loving devotion made an eternal **memorial**.

4. (Mar_14:10-11) Judas agrees to betray Jesus, changing the plans of the Jewish rulers - and they will immediately move to have Jesus arrested and executed.

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.

a. **Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve:** Why would one of Jesus’ own disciples betray Him? What motive could Judas have? Many have speculated through the years. Perhaps his feelings were hurt when Jesus rebuked him when Mary poured the ointment over Jesus’ feet. Perhaps it was plain greed. Some speculate that Judas wanted to “force” Jesus into an open display of Messianic glory.

i. Mat_26:15 makes it clear that Judas *bargained* with the religious leaders for the life of Jesus. He asked them, “*What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?*” Certainly, part of his motivation was pure greed.

ii. Whatever Judas’ motive was, it was *his* motive. God used a *willing* Satan, who used a *willing* Judas. God ordained that these things happen, but He did not *prompt* Judas to sin.

b. **When they heard it, they were glad:** For a long time, the religious leaders wanted to destroy Jesus (Mar_3:6). Now they have a precious ally - a disciple to **betray Him**.

B. Jesus' final Passover with His disciples.

1. (Mar_14:12-16) Preparation for Passover; the feast that remembers Israel's redemption.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover *lamb*, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished *and* prepared; there make ready for us." So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

a. **A man . . . carrying a pitcher** was an unusual sight. Women usually carried liquids in pitchers and men normally carried liquids in animal skin containers. Therefore, **a man . . . carrying a pitcher** would be a distinctive sign to the disciples.

b. **The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room"** : The scene here implies secrecy, and Jesus had good reason to quietly make arrangements for Passover. Jesus didn't want Judas to betray Him before He could give a final important talk to the disciples.

i. "The Lord must have had many unknown disciples, upon whom He could reply at such moments to render unquestioning service." (Cole)

c. **And they prepared the Passover:** There seems to be a difference between the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and John about the Passover. The implication in the synoptic gospels is that Jesus was crucified *on the day after* Passover, and that this meal was the day before. John seems

to say that Jesus was crucified *on the day of Passover* itself, as a Passover lamb (Joh_18:28 and Joh_19:14).

i. "Possibly the best explanation is that there were different calendars in use. Jesus died as the Passover victims were being slain according to the official calendar; but he had held the Passover with his followers the previous evening, according to an unofficial calendar." (Morris)

ii. None of the synoptic gospels mention a *lamb* at the Passover meal. Some believe that this is because they could not obtain one before the "official" day of Passover. Jesus may have wanted it this way to emphasize the idea that *He* was the Passover sacrifice.

2. (Mar_14:17-21) Jesus gives Judas a chance to repent.

In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me." And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, "*Is it I?*" And another *said*, "*Is it I?*" He answered and said to them, "*It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.*"

a. **He sat down with the twelve:** At the first Passover God commanded them to eat the meal standing and ready to leave Egypt (Exo_12:11). Since Israel came into the Promised Land, they believed that they could eat the Passover sitting or reclining, because now they were at rest in the land God gave them.

b. **One of you who eats with Me will betray Me:** The disciples heard many surprising things from Jesus, but certainly this must have been one of the most surprising things they ever heard Him say. Not one of them suspected Judas, and the idea that one of them would seek to **betray** and kill Jesus must have seemed absurd.

c. **It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me:** In saying **who dips with Me**, Jesus is not singling out Judas (though

Judas, sitting in the place of honor, would have been given the special portion). All the disciples dipped with Him, so this phrase identifies the betrayer as a *friend*.

i. In Middle Eastern culture, betraying a friend after eating a meal with him *was* and *is* regarded as the worst kind of treachery.

d. **Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!** Judas is rightly regarded as one of the most notorious sinners of all time. Even though his actions fulfilled prophecy (**The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him**), his own wicked motive condemned him. Judas will never be able to justify himself before God on the day of judgment by claiming, "I was just fulfilling prophecy."

i. In the warning of Jesus we see a profound love for Judas. This is his last, fleeting opportunity to turn back from his evil plot. A remarkable thing to remember is that Jesus loved both Mary and Judas. We almost want to think that He loved Mary and hated Judas, but that isn't the case. If we miss His love towards Judas - rejected love, to be sure - if we miss that love, we miss the whole story.

ii. This should warn us against having the attitude that our sin against another person doesn't really matter if God somehow redeems it in their life. God redeemed it all when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery but they still meant it for evil and were responsible for their sin (Gen_50:20).

3. (Mar_14:22-25) The Last Supper.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

a. **Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it:** When the bread was lifted up at Passover, the head of the meal would say: "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let everyone who hungers come and eat; let everyone who is needy come and eat the Passover meal." Everything eaten at the Passover meal had a symbolic meaning.

The bitter herbs recalled the bitterness of slavery; the salt water remembered the tears shed under Egypt's oppression. The main course of the meal - a lamb freshly sacrificed for that particular household - did not symbolize anything connected to the agonies of Egypt. It was the sin-bearing sacrifice that allowed the judgment of God to pass over the household that believed.

b. **Take, eat; this is My body . . . This is the blood of the new covenant:** Jesus didn't give the normal explanation of the meaning of each of the foods. He reinterpreted them in Himself, and the focus was no longer on the suffering of Israel in Egypt, but on the sin-bearing suffering of Jesus on their behalf.

c. Christians have debated for centuries about the true nature of the **bread** and the **cup** at this supper.

i. The Roman Catholic Church holds the idea of *transubstantiation*, which teaches that the bread and the wine *actually* become the body and blood of Jesus.

ii. Martin Luther held the idea of *consubstantiation*, which teaches the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine, but by faith they are the same as Jesus' actual body. Luther did not believe in the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, but he did not go far from it.

iii. John Calvin taught that Jesus' presence in the bread and wine was real, but only *spiritual*, not physical. Zwingli taught that the bread and wine are mere *symbols* that represent the body and blood of Jesus. When the Swiss Reformers debated the issue with Martin Luther at Marburg, there was a huge contention. Luther insisted on some kind of physical

presence because Jesus said “**this is My body.**” He insisted over and over again, writing it on the velvet of the table, *Hoc est corpus meum* - “**this is My body**” in Latin. Zwingli replied that Jesus also said “I am the vine,” and “I am the door,” but we understand what He said. Luther answered, “I don’t know, but if Christ told me to eat dung I would do it knowing that it was good for me.” Luther was so strong on this because he saw it as an issue of believing Jesus’ words, and because he thought Zwingli compromised on this point, he said Zwingli was of *another spirit* (*andere geist*). Ironically, later Luther later read Calvin’s writings on the Lord’s Supper (which were essentially the same as Zwingli’s) and seemed to agree with Calvin’s views.

iv. According to Scripture, we can understand that the **bread** and the **cup** are not *mere* symbols, but they are powerful pictures to partake of - to enter in to - as we see the Lord’s Table as the new Passover.

d. **Take, eat:** We can’t get so caught up in discovering what the **bread** and the **cup** mean that we forget to do what Jesus said to do *with them*. We must **take** and **eat**.

i. **Take** means that it won’t be *forced* upon you. You have to receive it.

ii. **Eat** means that this is absolutely vital for you. Without food and drink, we perish. Without Jesus, we perish. It also means that you must take Jesus into your innermost being.

e. Beyond all the controversy about what the elements of this supper really are and what they really mean, the announcement that Jesus brings a **new covenant** stands out.

i. No mere man could ever institute a **new covenant** between God and man, but Jesus is the God-man. He has the authority to establish a **new covenant**, sealed with blood, even as the old covenant was sealed with blood (Exo_24:8).

ii. What is the new covenant all about? It is all about an inner transformation that cleanses us from all sin: *For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more*

(Jer_31:34). This transformation puts God's Word and will in us: *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts* (Jer_31:33). This covenant is all about a new, close, relationship with God: *I will be their God, and they shall be My people* (Jer_31:33).

iii. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, we have can have a new covenant relationship with God - but many of us live as if there is no inner transformation; there is no cleansing from sin; as if there is no word and will of God in our hearts; and as if there is no new and close relationship with God.

f. **Until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God:** Jesus has not yet celebrated a Passover in heaven. He is waiting for all His people to be gathered to Him and then there will be a great supper - *the marriage supper of the Lamb* (Rev_19:9). This is the fulfillment **in the kingdom of God** Jesus longed for.

i. "There is no Lord's Supper in heaven, for there it is 'fulfilled' in the marriage-feast of the Lamb." (Cole) ii. "Among devout Jews it was common to remain together at the table for several hours after the conclusion of the meal, deep in conversation about God's past and future acts of redemption." (Lane)

4. (Mar_14:26-31) Jesus predicts the desertion of the disciples and Peter's denial.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I *will* not *be*." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, *even* this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise.

a. **When they had sung a hymn:** We don't often think of Jesus singing, but He did. He lifted His voice in adoration and worship to God the Father. We can endlessly wonder what His voice sounded like, but we know for certain that He sang with more than His voice, and He lifted His whole heart up in praise. This reminds us that God *wants* to be praised with singing. Well more than 40 different passages in the Psalms show us how God loves to be honored with singing.

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I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. (Psa_9:2) .

Sing praise to the LORD, You saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. (Psa_30:4) .

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! (Psa_47:6) .

For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. (Psa_47:7) .

I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations. (Psa_57:9) .

Sing out the honor of His name; make His praise glorious. (Psa_66:2)

.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High. (Psa_92:1) .

Then they believed His words; they sang His praise. (Psa_106:12)

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While I live I will praise the LORD; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. (Psa_146:2) .

Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. (Psa_147:1) .

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints. (Psa_149:1) i. It is remarkable that Jesus could sing on this night before His crucifixion. Could you sing in such circumstances?

Will you let Jesus be your worship leader? “What! A Christian silent when others are praising his Master? No; he must join in the song. Satan tries to make God’s people dumb, but he cannot, for the Lord has not a tongue-tied child in all his family. They can all speak, and they can all cry, even if they cannot all sing, and I think there are times when they can all sing; yea, they must, for you know the promise, ‘Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing.’

Surely, when Jesus leads the tune, if there should be any silent ones in the Lord’s family, they must begin to praise the name of the Lord.” (Spurgeon)

ii. This means we should sing to God our Father - *just as Jesus did* - because this is something that pleases Him, and when we love someone we want to do the things that please *them*. It really doesn’t matter if it does or doesn’t please *us*.

iii. “What is singing but emotional expression? Oh! The value and the power of emotion. Evil emotion slays the Lord of life and glory! Pure emotion makes possible the saving of the slayers.” (Morgan)

b. **Sung a hymn:** It is wonderful that Jesus sang, but *what* did He sing? A Passover meal always ended with singing three Psalms known as the *Hallel*, Psalms 116-118. Think of how the words of these Psalms would have ministered to Jesus as He sang them on the night before His crucifixion: ·

The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!” (Psa_116:3-4) ·

For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. (Psa_116:8-9)

.

I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. (Psa_116:13-15) .

Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! (Psa_117:1) .

You pushed me violently, that I might fall, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. (Psa_118:13-14)

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I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, and I will praise the LORD. (Psa_118:17-19)

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The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. (Psa_118:22-23)

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God is the LORD, and He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. (Psa_118:27-28) i. "When Jesus arose to go the Gethsemane, Psalms 118 was upon his lips. It provided an appropriate description of how God would guide his Messiah through distress and suffering to glory." (Lane)

c. They went to the Mount of Olives: "Jesus tarried with them in the Upper Room for the wonderful discourse and

prayer in John 14-17. They may have gone out to the street after Joh_14:31.” (Robertson)

i. “Our Lord knew that his time was now come when he must be actually delivered into the hands of his enemies.

That he might not therefore cause any disturbance either to the master of the family wherein he was, or to the city, though it was now midnight, he goeth out of the city.” (Ironsides)

d. **All of you will be made to stumble:** Jesus says this not to condemn His disciples, but to show them that He really is in command of the situation, and to demonstrate that the Scriptures regarding the suffering of the Messiah *must* be fulfilled.

i. This was not the first time Jesus warned Peter and the other disciples that they would forsake Him. From a careful reconstruction of the Gospels, we find that Jesus first warned them about this in the upper room, now again in the Garden of Gethsemane.

e. **After I have been raised:** This shows that Jesus is already looking beyond the cross. He has His eyes fixed on *the joy set before Him* (Heb_12:2).

f. **Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be:** We wonder how Peter could ever say such a thing. Tragically, Peter was unaware of both the spiritual *reality* and the spiritual *battle* that Jesus clearly saw. Peter only looked to how he felt at the moment, and at the moment he felt pretty brave.

i. However, when you walk on feelings everything can change pretty quickly. Soon, Peter will be intimidated before a humble servant girl, and before her Peter will deny that he even knows Jesus.

ii. “It is sometimes easier to bear a great load for Christ than a small one. Some of us could be martyrs at the stake more easily than confessors among sneering neighbors.” (Maclaren)

g. Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times:

Peter, despite his bold proclamation that he will never be made to stumble, will fail in what he thought was his strong area - courage and boldness. Through this solemn warning Jesus gave Peter an opportunity to take heed and consider his own weakness.

i. It was an opportunity that Peter sadly did not take: **he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”** Jesus knew Peter far better than Peter did, and in over-estimating himself, Peter was set up for a fall.

ii. **He spoke more vehemently:** “This strong compound adverb only in Mark and probably preserves Peter’s own statement of the remark.” (Robertson)

iii. The rest of the disciples also overestimated their strength and did not rely on the Lord in the critical hour: **And they all said likewise.** The Apostle Paul warned us against falling where we think we are strong: *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall* (1Co_10:12). When we think we are beyond the reach of some sins, we are ready for a fall.

iv. This shows is that *friends will fail us*, but the Lord God never will. If Jesus suffered times when He was forsaken by all, we can expect to experience similar times.

v. This shows us that even if we deny Jesus or forsake Him, He still loves us and wants to woo us to repentance and restoration. We perhaps would have expected Jesus to give to Peter and the rest as good as they gave to Him - He might have forsaken or abandoned them, but He never did. *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.* (2Ti_2:13)

vi. We often want to tell the person who is full of himself and flying high “it’s not all about you.” However, the person who has failed and been and laid low needs to hear the same thing. “It’s not all about you. Jesus’ love and restoration is

greater than your failure. Come to Jesus and let it be about Him, not you.”

C. Jesus’ prayer and arrest in Gethsemane.

1. (Mar_14:32-36) Jesus’ prayer of distress.

Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch.” He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, “Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*. ”

a. **Gethsemane**: This is a place just east of the temple mount area in Jerusalem, across the ravine of the Brook Kidron, and on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Surrounded by ancient olive trees, **Gethsemane** means “olive press” - it was a place where olives from the neighborhood were crushed for their oil. So too, the Son of God would be crushed here.

b. **He began to be troubled and deeply distressed . . .**

My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death: If Jesus knew what the Father’s will was, why such agony? It was because Jesus was to be a sacrifice for sins, and He wasn’t an unknowing sacrificial animal and He was no victim of circumstances. He willingly resolved to lay down His life.

i. What was it that affected Jesus so? It was not so much the horror of physical torture, but the spiritual horror of the cross - of *being made sin* (2Co_5:21). This is what made Jesus **troubled and deeply distressed**.

ii. Heb_5:7-8 describes Jesus’ agony in the Gethsemane: *Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard*

because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

iii. "His holy soul shrank from the awfulness of being made sin upon the tree. It was not death, but the divine anger against sin, the imputation to Him of all our iniquities that filled His soul with horror. There was no conflict of wills." (Ironsides)

c. **Abba, Father:** In this moment of deep distress, Jesus didn't feel *far* from God the Father. He felt so close to the Father that He used the name **Abba**, a child's familiar name for "daddy."

d. **Take this cup away from Me:** In response to Jesus' deeply moved prayers, the Father did not take the cup from Jesus; but He strengthened Jesus to be able to take - and drink - the cup.

i. What **cup**? Repeatedly in the Old Testament, the **cup** is a powerful picture of the wrath and judgment of God: ·

For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is fully mixed, and He pours it out; surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down. (Psa_75:8) ·

Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out. (Isa_51:17) ·

For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it." (Jer_25:15)

ii. Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father's fury, so we would not have to drink from that cup - *this* was the source of Jesus' agony.

iii. Mat_20:22-23 speaks of a cup that the followers of Jesus must also drink. "In any case, our cup can never be as deep or as bitter as was his, and there were in his cup some ingredients that never will be found in ours. The bitterness

of sin was there, but he has taken that away for all who believe in him. His Father's wrath was there, but he drank that all up, and left not a single dreg for any one of his people." (Spurgeon)

e. **Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will:**

Jesus came to a point of decision in Gethsemane. It wasn't that He had not decided nor consented before, but now He had come upon a unique point of decision. He drank the cup at Calvary, but He *decided* once for all to drink it at Gethsemane. The struggle of the cross was won at the Garden of Gethsemane.

i. This struggle at Gethsemane - the place of crushing - has an important place in fulfilling God's plan of redemption. If Jesus failed here, He would have failed at the cross. His success here made the victory at the cross possible.

f. **If it were possible:** Jesus wasn't asking for permission to let humanity perish in hell; He was asking the Father, "If there is any other possible way to save humanity other than the agony which awaits Me at the cross - let it be." Yet there was no other way, so Jesus will go to the cross.

i. This prayer of Jesus eliminates any other way of salvation. If there is another way, His death was not *necessary* and His prayer was not answered.

g. **Not what I will, but what You will:** Some criticize such a prayer in the mouth of a Christian, saying it is a prayer that lacks faith. But to pray **not what I will, but what You will** is a prayer of great faith and trust in God. If such a prayer insults God, then Jesus insulted His Father at this crucial moment in the Garden of Gethsemane.

2. (Mar_14:37-42) The sleeping disciples.

Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were

heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

a. **He came and found them sleeping:** At this moment of great agony, Jesus is all alone. His disciples give Him no support at all. Though this is not to their credit - they failed Jesus - it was the way it had to be - Jesus had to face the terrors of the cross all alone.

b. **Simon, are you sleeping?** It is not necessary to see Jesus as irritated at His disciples. He said this in love, and in compassionate understanding. He knew them better than they knew themselves.

i. Peter must have been a bit startled to hear Jesus call him **Simon**. This was the old sleeping **Simon**, not the new man **Peter**. Peter was ready to resist any attack, except the attack of the *Sandman*.

c. **Watch and pray, let you enter into temptation:** Jesus knew Peter would fail; yet He encourages him to victory, knowing that the resources are found in *watching* and *praying*. If Peter woke up (both physically and spiritually), and drew close in dependence on God, he could have kept from denying Jesus at the critical hour.

i. Jesus found victory at the cross by succeeding in the struggle in Gethsemane. Peter - just like us - failed in later **temptation** because he failed to **watch and pray**. The spiritual battle is often *won* or *lost* before the crisis comes.

d. **He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words:** Jesus repeated the prayer outlined in Mar_14:34-36. Some say it is unspiritual, or reflects a lack of faith, to repeat prayers. Will they accuse Jesus of being unspiritual or of lacking faith?

e. **When He returned, He found them asleep again . . . Then He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?"** Three times Jesus

prayed; three times Jesus checked to see if His disciples would stand by Him in prayer, and pray for their own strength in the coming trial. They were asleep each time.

i. How often does Jesus “check on us” and find us asleep? It was bad enough that the disciples didn’t **watch and pray** for *themselves*, they also should have been willing to **watch and pray** simply for the sake of Jesus. Through prayer and companionship, we must stand beside others in their time of need.

ii. “He told them to ‘Sleep on now’; and they slept; and He watched them while they slept . . . He said in effect: Go and have your sleep out; I can watch; and He watched them while they slept.” (Morgan)

f. **It is enough!** We should not think that Jesus was angry or irritated because His disciples did not help Him. He wanted the disciples to help Him and stand in prayer, not for His own sake, but for their own benefit. Jesus *could* stand alone against the trial of cross, but *they*, being prayerless, would not.

3. (Mar_14:43-52) The arrest of Jesus of Nazareth in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead *Him* away safely.” As soon as He had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” Then they all forsook Him and fled. Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen

cloth thrown around *his* naked *body*. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

a. **Whomever I kiss:** Apparently, Jesus was normal enough in appearance so that it was necessary that Judas specifically identify Him for the sake of those arresting Jesus, and he chose to identify Jesus by greeting Him with a kiss. This was a cruel pretence to affection, especially adding **“Rabbi, Rabbi!”** to the greeting.

i. “In addition to the Temple police, who were Levites, the Sanhedrin had at its disposal auxiliary police or servants of the court who were assigned the task of maintaining public order beyond the Temple precincts. They were authorized to make arrests, lead accused persons to the court, guard prisoners, and carry out sentences imposed by the court. The arresting army in Gethsemane must have consisted of armed court attendants of this kind.” (Lane) b. **One of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest:** Joh_18:10 identifies this unnamed swordsman as Peter. Here Peter is a great example of someone who, wielding the power of this world in his hands, could only cut off ears; but wielding the Word of God, could pierce hearts for God’s glory (Act_2:37).

i. “When the Church takes sword in hand, it usually shows that it does not know how to wield it, and as often as not has struck the wrong man.” (Maclaren)

ii. Luke tells us that Jesus healed the damage done by Peter (Luk_22:51). It isn’t the last time Jesus has had to leave behind a mess left by one of His followers. “Had Jesus not healed Malchus, Peter would have been arrested as well; and there might have been four crosses at Calvary.” (Barclay)

c. **But the Scriptures must be fulfilled:** Jesus marvels they have sent such a small army to arrest Him. Yet, He is in command; with a word He could destroy all those who came to arrest Him, but Jesus is “playing along” in order to fulfill Scripture.

d. **They all forsook Him and fled:** At this point, all the disciples scattered, and ran for their own safety. A few (Peter and John, at least) followed back to see what would happen at a distance. None of them stood beside Jesus and said, “I have given my life to this Man. What you accuse Him of, you may accuse me of also.” Instead, it was fulfilled what Jesus said: *All of you will be made to stumble because of Me* (Mar_14:27).

e. **Now a certain young man followed Him . . . and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked:** Jesus is forsaken even by a young follower, who in the confusion fled naked. Since the earliest days of the church, commentators have supposed this young man to be Mark himself. It was his humble way of saying, “I was there.”

i. Many people suppose that the upper room where Jesus held the last supper just a few hours earlier was at a home owned by Mark’s family. Act_12:12 says that the disciples used to meet at the home of Mark’s mother. It may be that the arresting army led by Judas first came to Mark’s home, because that is where Judas last left Jesus. When Judas and the group came and found them gone, it would have been easy for Judas to suppose that they went to Gethsemane, because Jesus was accustomed to going there (Luk_22:39). When the Judas and the group started out for Gethsemane, we can imagine that young Mark hurriedly dressed in a simple **linen cloth** and set out to beat Judas and his gang to Gethsemane so he could warn Jesus.

ii. “It is usually supposed that Mark himself, son of Mary (Act_12:12) in whose house they probably had observed the Passover meal, had followed Jesus and the apostles to the Garden.” (Robertson)

iii. Lane writes that Mark recorded this “To emphasize the fact that *all* fled, leaving Jesus alone in the custody of the police. No one remained with Jesus, not even a valiant young man who intended to follow him.”

iv. “The modest spirit of Mark seemed to say, ‘Friend Peter, while the Holy Ghost moves me to, tell thy fault, and let it stand on record, he also constrains me to write my own as a sort of preface to it, for I, too, in my mad, hare-brained folly, would have run, unclothed as I was, upon the guard to rescue my Lord and Master; yet, at the first sight, of the rough legionaries, at the first gleam of their swords, away I fled, timid, faint-hearted, and afraid that I should be too roughly handled.’” (Spurgeon)

D. The trial before the Sanhedrin.

1. Mark does not record the preliminary trial before Annas, who was the real power behind the high priest’s office (recorded in Joh_18:12-13; Joh_18:19-23), nor does he record the second trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, the “official” daylight trial recorded in Luk_22:66-71.

a. There are similarities between the trials, because the same people are involved. There were actually three phases of Jesus’ trial before the Jewish authorities and three phases of His trial before the Roman authorities, and they should not be confused.

b. Upon His arrest, Jesus was first taken to Annas, then to an illegal “night court” of the Sanhedrin (which Mark will describe next), then to an “official” daylight trial of the Sanhedrin, then to Pilate, who sent Jesus to Herod, who sent Jesus back to Pilate, where He then went to the cross.

2. (Mar_14:53-59) Jesus is accused before the Sanhedrin.

And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple

made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" But not even then did their testimony agree.

a. **The led Jesus away to the high priest:** This trial of Jesus was terribly illegal according to Jewish law. There was much in the Jewish legal process to protect the rights of the accused, and all of this was ignored and deliberately broken by those who were determined to put Jesus to death.

b. **Heard Him say, "I will destroy this temple"** : Jesus, as recorded in Joh_2:19, spoke clearly of the temple of His body. The words of Jesus' false accusers - **"this temple made with hands"** were never uttered by Jesus. Essentially, they accused Jesus of being a terrorist who wanted to destroy the temple.

i. "The accusation was utterly serious, for throughout the Graeco-Roman world the destruction or desecration of places of worship was regarded as a capital offense." (Lane)

ii. Morgan on their accusation: "This is the most diabolical form of untruth, because it is an untruth in which there is an element of truth. We remember Tennyson's words: 'A lie that is all a lie, may be met and fought outright; But a lie that is partly the truth, is a harder matter to fight.'"

c. **But not even then did their testimony agree:** Though it was a false case, the accusers of Jesus could not put together a good case. The false witnesses kept disagreeing with one another.

i. "It was harder to agree on a consistent lie than to tell the simple truth." (Cole)

3. (Mar_14:60-62) Jesus testifies at His own trial.

And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?" But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

a. **And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus:** “For greater solemnity he arose to make up by bluster the lack of evidence.” (Robinson)

i. “Suggesting that the high priest arose from his seat and advanced into the semi-circle of the council towards Jesus - the action of an irritated, baffled man.” (Bruce)

ii. “It was a tacit confession that Christ had been proved innocent up till then. The high priest would not have needed to draw something out of the accused one if there had been sufficient material

against him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point, and he knew it, and was red with rage.

Now he attempts to bully the prisoner that he may extract some declaration from him which may save all further trouble of witnesses, and end the matter.” (Spurgeon)

b. **He kept silent and answered nothing:** Jesus *could* have mounted a magnificent defense here, calling forth all the various witnesses to His deity, power and character. The people He taught, the people He healed, the dead risen, the blind who see, even the demons themselves testified to His deity. But Jesus *opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth* (Isa 53:7).

c. **I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power:** Jesus, when asked under formal oath to “incriminate” Himself, essentially said, “You now stand in judgment of Me, but I will be the ultimate judge.” These were words that would have given any wise judge pause, but did not slow His accusers down at all.

i. Here we see that Jesus was on trial - He seemed to lose, but He really won. His conduct at His trial showed His innocence, and was all part of the plan of redemption - which we must receive as God’s gift.

ii. In a real sense, it isn’t Jesus that is on trial at all - it is more true to say that the religious leaders were on trial -

they seemed to win, but they really lost. In fact, we all are on trial before Jesus, and will be held to account for what we do with Him.

4. (Mar_14:63-65) The Sanhedrin condemns Jesus to death. Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.

a. They react with a self-righteous, melodramatic horror (**the high priest tore his clothes . . . You have heard the blasphemy!)** and subsequent abuse and brutality (**some began to spit on Him . . . and to beat Him**).

b. **And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands:** As terrible as the judgment of the religious leaders against Jesus was, at least it had a *reason* - envy and fear of Jesus. These **officers**, taking a bizarre pleasure in torturing Jesus, don’t even have a *reason* - they do it only because of what others (the religious leaders) said about Jesus.

i. In this sense, we see also that these **officers** were “on trial” before Jesus, and they seemed to win because they landed the punches and laughed, but they really lost.

ii. When we consider who Jesus is - the sinless Son of God, who *never* sinned against God or man in His entire life, the scene becomes all the more horrifying: this is what the world does to God when they have the opportunity.

iii. “Be astonished, O heavens, and be horribly afraid. His face is the light of the universe, his person is the glory of heaven, and they ‘began to spit on him.’ Alas, my God, that man should be so base!” (Spurgeon) c. Understanding that Jesus endured such pain and humiliation should cause us to respond in three ways.

i. *We should bravely bear pain and humiliation for the sake of Jesus ourselves.* “How ready should we be to hear slander

and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff, and think it a strange thing that people should mock at you. Who are you, dear sir? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall he have all the bitter, and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier you, to demand better fare than your Captain!" (Spurgeon)

ii. *We should be more diligent to praise Jesus.* "How earnestly, next, ought we to honor our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put him to shame, let us be ten times more earnest to bring him glory. Is there anything we can do today by which he may be honored? Let us set about it. Can we make any sacrifice? Can we perform any difficult task which would glorify him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with our might. Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying him, even as his adversaries were ingenious in the methods of his shame." (Spurgeon) iii. *We should have more assurance and confidence in receiving the finished work of Jesus for our redemption.*

"Surely I know that he who suffered this, since he was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us.

Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions. Glory be to God, that spittle on his countenance means a clear, bright face for me. Those false accusations on his character mean no condemnation for me." (Spurgeon) 5. (Mar_14:66-72) Peter's denial.

Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are *one* of

them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*. ” Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!” A second time *the* rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And when he thought about it, he wept.

a. **Now as Peter was below in the courtyard:** As Mark concludes the story of Peter’s denial in Mar_14:66-72, he does it as a “flashback.” This didn’t happen as Jesus was being beaten, but as He was on trial.

i. Peter’s first problem was that he *followed Him at a distance* (Mar_14:54). When we distance ourselves from Jesus, it is hard to make a proper stand for Him at the critical time.

ii. Next, Peter *sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire* (Mar_14:54). Peter found fellowship and warmth in the company of the ungodly, having forsaken the fellowship of the fleeing disciples. Peter wants to seem just one of this crowd, not a follower of Jesus.

iii. We might compliment Peter for following more closely than most of the other disciples. After all, they all turned and ran, but we can almost see Peter remembering, “I said I would stand by Jesus, so I must. Let me follow up and see what I can do.” From there, it just got worse.

iv. The *officers* of Mar_14:65 who struck Jesus are the same people as the *servants* of Mar_14:54, because the same ancient Greek word is used of both groups. Peter sat and associated himself with the same men who beat Jesus, and they beat Him just because someone else told them that Jesus was a wicked man.

b. **I neither know nor understand what you are saying:** A hostile man of authority didn’t interrogate Peter, as was the case with Jesus before the high priest. Just **one of the servant girls** was enough to make Peter deny Jesus. “A silly wench daunteth and dispiriteth this stout champion.” (Trapp)

i. Lane on **I neither know nor understand**: “Peter denied the charge, using the form common in rabbinical law for a formal, legal denial.”

ii. “Yet all this evil sprung from the *fear of man*. How many denials of Christ and his truth have sprung since, from the same cause!” (Clarke)

iii. And, as if it would help distance himself from association with Jesus, Peter **began to curse and swear**. When we hear that kind of language, we assume the person is not a follower of Jesus Christ. What do people think from how you talk?

iv. Jesus was on trial, the religious leaders were on trial, the officers were on trial - but Peter was also on trial. In his testing, he really did lose - but he won in the end.

c. **And when he thought about it, he wept**: Peter finally **called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him**, but he remembered it too late - it was *after* he had sinned. For now, all Peter can do is to weep bitterly - but he will be restored.

i. “It was not the crowing of the cock that convicted Peter; it was the remembering of Christ’s words.” (Wiersbe) ii. We have all made promises to Jesus that we have not kept; when that is the case, there is an appropriate time to weep bitterly - but then a time to come back to Jesus, who will always receive you back.

d. There is a significant contrast between Judas and Peter. Both of them denied Jesus in one way or another, but one was restored and the other was not. Restoring Peter was important to Jesus; after His resurrection, Jesus had a private meeting with Peter (Luk_24:34) and a public restoration with Peter (John 21).

i. Judas ended up as an apostate, and Peter was a backslider who suffered spiritual decline from an experience he once enjoyed.

ii. A month earlier, it would have been hard to say that Peter was more a true disciple than Judas; but the evidence came

as Peter repented and received restoration after his sin, Judas was sorry but never repented or received restoration.

iii. In our own way, we have each denied Jesus. Have we faced up to it and received restoration as Peter did? Even if we have denied Jesus, we can be restored.

iv. There was an evangelist named Brownlow North. He was a man of God, but in his youth he lived a wild and sinful life. Before he was going to preach one Sunday a man handed him a letter recounting a shameful incident from Brownlow North's life from before he walked with God, and the letter said that if North dared to preach that morning, the man would rise in the church and publicly proclaim some of the terrible things Brownlow North once did. North took the letter into the pulpit with him, and he read it to the congregation. He told them that it was perfectly true, and that he had repented and received forgiveness in Jesus. Through showing that a man can deny Jesus but still be restored, he drew many to Christ.

(Mar 14:2) For they said, "Not during the feast, so there won't be a riot among the people."⁴

(Mar 14:3) ***Jesus' Anointing***

Now⁵ while Jesus⁶ was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, reclining at the table,⁷ a woman came with an alabaster jar⁸ of costly aromatic oil⁹ from pure nard. After breaking open the jar, she poured it on his head.

(Mar 14:4) But some who were present indignantly said to one another, "Why this waste of expensive¹⁰ ointment?

(Mar 14:5) It¹¹ could have been sold for more than three hundred silver coins¹² and the money¹³ given to the poor!" So¹⁴ they spoke angrily to her.

(Mar 14:6) But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a good service for me.

(Mar 14:7) For you will always have the poor with you, and you can do good for them whenever you want. But you will not always have me!¹⁵

(Mar 14:8) She did what she could. She anointed my body beforehand for burial.

(Mar 14:9) I tell you the truth,¹⁶ wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."

(Mar 14:10) ***The Plan to Betray Jesus***

Then¹⁷ Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus into their hands.¹⁸

(Mar 14:11) When they heard this, they were delighted¹⁹ and promised to give him money.²⁰ So²¹ Judas²² began looking for an opportunity to betray him.

(Mar 14:12) ***The Passover***

Now²³ on the first day of the feast of²⁴ Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed,²⁵ Jesus'²⁶ disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?"²⁷

(Mar 14:13) He sent two of his disciples and told them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar²⁸ of water will meet you. Follow him.

(Mar 14:14) Wherever he enters, tell the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' "

(Mar 14:15) He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

(Mar 14:16) So²⁹ the disciples left, went³⁰ into the city, and found things just as he had told them,³¹ and they prepared the Passover.

(Mar 14:17) Then,³² when it was evening, he came to the house³³ with the twelve.

(Mar 14:18) While they were at the table³⁴ eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth,³⁵ one of you eating with me will betray me."³⁶

(Mar 14:19) They were distressed, and one by one said to him, "Surely not I?"

(Mar 14:20) He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips his hand³⁷ with me into the bowl.³⁸

(Mar 14:21) For the Son of Man will go as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for him if he had never been born."

(Mar 14:22) ***The Lord's Supper***

While they were eating, he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it. This is my body."

(Mar 14:23) And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

(Mar 14:24) He said to them, "This is my blood, the blood³⁹ of the covenant,⁴⁰ that is poured out for many.

(Mar 14:25) I tell you the truth,⁴¹ I will no longer drink of the fruit⁴² of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

(Mar 14:26) After singing a hymn,⁴³ they went out to the Mount of Olives.

(Mar 14:27) ***The Prediction of Peter's Denial***

Then⁴⁴ Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for i

(Mar 15:1) ***Jesus Brought Before Pilate***

Early in the morning, after forming a plan, the chief priests with the elders and the experts in the law¹ and the whole Sanhedrin tied Jesus up, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.²

(Guzik)

Mar 15:1-47

Mark 15 - THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

A. The trial before Pilate.

1. (Mar_15:1-5) The first audience with Pilate.

Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole

council; and they bound Jesus, led *Him* away, and delivered *Him* to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered and said to him, “*It is as you say.*” And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

a. **Held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole counsel:** This is the “official” daylight trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin described in Luk_22:66-71.

i. This trial was held **immediately, in the morning** for good reason. “The detail that Jesus was delivered to Pilate’s forum early in the morning is a significant index of the historical accuracy of the tradition. It was necessary for the Sanhedrin to bring its business to Pilate as soon after dawn as possible because the working day of a Roman official began at the earliest hour of daylight. Legal trials in the Roman forum were customarily held shortly after sunrise.” (Lane)

b. **Delivered Him to Pilate:** Why did the Jewish leaders take Jesus to Pilate at all? First, they did not have the legal right to execute their own criminals because Rome revoked that right in 7 A.D. At the time, the Jews regarded this loss as a national disaster because to them it was the final proof that they no longer had the basic right of self-government: to punish their own criminals, and it demonstrated that they were totally under the boot of Rome.

i. There were times when the Jews disregarded this prohibition of the Romans and executed those they considered criminals, such as at the stoning of Stephen (Act_7:57-60). Why didn’t they take things into their own hands regarding Jesus? Because they knew multitudes had a favorable opinion of Jesus and if Pilate executed Him, they could distance themselves from the political fallout.

ii. In all probability, they brought Jesus to Pilate's residence when he visited Jerusalem at Herod's Palace. "When the Roman officials came to Jerusalem on special occasions, particularly at the great Jewish festivals, they took up quarters in the palace of Herod, which was situated at the northwest of the city. Josephus states explicitly that the procurator, Gessius Florus, lived there and held his court on the public square in front of the buildings" (Lane) c.

Delivered Him to Pilate: The Jewish leaders had reason to expect a favorable result when they sent Jesus to Pilate.

Secular history shows us he was a cruel, ruthless man, and completely insensitive to the moral feelings of others - surely, they thought, **Pilate** will put this Jesus to death.

i. There was something working *against* this expectation. History tells us that Pilate simply didn't like the Jews, and that he believed they were a stubborn and rebellious people. Since he was constantly suspicious of the Jews, when *they* brought him a prisoner for execution he immediately suspected there was a hidden agenda at work.

ii. Nevertheless, before Pilate could make a decision, he had to follow the normal procedures for a trial. Just like everything the Romans did, there was an established procedure for a criminal trial - trials that were public by principle.

- The plaintiff brought an indictment against the accused
- The magistrate - the judge - examined both the accusation and the accused
- The two main sources of evidence were the statements of the accused and evidence brought by witnesses, either for or against the accused
- When all the evidence was received, a court official declared that all the evidence was in
- The magistrate was then free to consult with advisors, and then announce his verdict from the judgment seat. The sentence was executed immediately

iii. Mark picks up the trial of Jesus at the second step - the charges were brought to Pilate ("This man is guilty of treason because He claims to be the king of the Jews in opposition to Caesar"). Now Pilate will examine the accused:

Are You the king of the Jews?

d. **Are You the King of the Jews?** The Jewish rulers knew that if they brought Jesus before Pilate on the charge of claiming to be God, Pilate would merely yawn. He would say, "We Romans have hundreds of gods. What is the harm with one more?" Yet, if they brought Jesus before Pilate as **the King of the Jews**, Pilate would have to take Jesus as a potential *political* threat, because there could be no king except Caesar, and Pilate was Caesar's representative.

i. Ironically, Jesus stood accused of doing exactly what He refused to do: taking a political stand against Rome.

ii. Jesus was indeed the king of the Jews, but not in a political or military sense. This is why He said, "yes" to Pilate's question, but "yes" with a reservation (**It is as you say**), and why He said nothing to the further accusations against Him (**the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing**). If Jesus would have answered a plain "Yes" to Pilate's question, Pilate would have all he needed to hear, and would have immediately declared Jesus guilty of treason against Rome. Because Jesus gave a qualified "Yes," it merited further examination.

iii. Luk_23:2 tells us what these accusations were. They said Jesus incited the people to riot, that He told them not to pay their taxes, and that He fancied Himself a king in political opposition to Rome. Pilate was unconvinced, so the accusers repeated and strengthened their third charge: *He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning in Galilee to this place* (Luk_23:5).

e. **The chief priests accused Him of many things:** Why, when Jesus had already "confessed" to Pilate? "The Sanhedrists must have seen from Pilate's manner, a smile on

his face perhaps, that he did not take the confession seriously.” (Bruce)

f. **Pilate marveled:** No doubt, Pilate had seen many men grovel for their lives before him. He also stood in judgment of many men as the governor of a Roman province. Yet there was something different about Jesus that Pilate marveled at.

i. “Such silence was wholly unusual in the forum, and demonstrated a presence and a dignity which puzzled the prefect.” (Lane)

ii. Without a defense from the accused, the law was on the side of the accusers. Roman magistrates didn’t like to find an undefended man guilty, but they often felt they had to.

2. (Mar_15:6-15) The second audience with Pilate.

Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, *who was* chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask *him to do* just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do *with Him* whom you call the King of the Jews?” So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!” So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.

a. **He was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them:** Pilate knew Jesus was an innocent man (Luk_23:14 records him as saying, *I have found no fault in this Man*). Yet Pilate had a politically explosive situation on his hands. Will he do what is right (free an innocent man) or what is

politically expedient (execute a man brought before him by the Jews for treason)?

i. In addition, Pilate was no friend of the Jews. He could see through their manipulation, and **he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy**. This made Pilate want to find a way to free Jesus even more.

b. **Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask:** This Jewish **multitude** - mostly Jews from Jerusalem, because most of the visiting pilgrims stayed out in *the country* (Mar_15:21) and were not in the city this early - didn't like or trust Pilate at all. When he suggested the release of one of two prisoners, they immediately chose the *other* one, as much anything just to be "against" the Roman magistrate. As far as the crowd was concerned, it was simple. *Their* Sanhedrin said Jesus should die, but said nothing about Barabbas. *Rome's* magistrate said Jesus should be set free and Barabbas executed. They would always side with *their* Sanhedrin against *Rome's* magistrate.

i. "The crowd seems to have come to Pilate's tribunal for the primary purpose of asking for Barabbas's release since it was customary for a prisoner to be released at the Passover Feast." (Wessel)

ii. "If one wonders why the crowd was fickle, he may recall that this was not yet the same people who followed him in triumphal entry and in the temple. That was the plan of Judas to get the thing over before those Galilean sympathizers waked up." (Robertson)

c. **Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?** In the midst of this, Pilate believes he has found a way to do what is right, yet not pay a price for it. Pilate thinks Jesus can escape death if He is released according to the custom of releasing a prisoner every Passover season.

i. Pilate figures, "If this man claimed to be king, and was even the slightest bit hostile to Rome, then the crowd will love him. These Jewish leaders don't want Jesus to go free, but the crowd will sympathize with Him."

ii. It is a strange, almost insane scene: a cruel, ruthless Roman governor trying to win the life of a miracle-working Jew against the strenuous efforts of both the Jewish leaders and the crowd.

d. **They cried out again, “Crucify Him!”** Pilate was convinced the crowd would release Jesus, but instead they chose **Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow insurrectionists**. The word “**insurrectionists**” basically amounts to “terrorists.” Barabbas was a *real* political enemy of Rome, not a falsely accused political enemy, as Jesus was.

i. **What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?** Pilate probably hoped that the crowd would be satisfied with a lesser punishment - that Jesus could be beaten and then let go.

Pilate was probably surprised and horrified that they **cried out more exceedingly, “Crucify Him!”**

ii. Why did the crowd choose Barabbas? Because **the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them**. We may imagine that many in this crowd had, just a few days before, been crying “Hosanna” to Jesus - but there has never been a shortage of people who will just do whatever the crowd will do.

iii. As the crowd rejects Jesus, they embrace Barabbas - whose name means “son of the father,” and who was a terrorist and a murderer. They have accepted a false “son of the father.”

iv. If anyone should be able to say, “Jesus died for me,” it should be **Barabbas**. He knew what it was to have Jesus die on his behalf, the innocent in the place of the guilty.

e. **They cried out more exceedingly, “Crucify Him!”**

Pilate is now in a dangerous place; the crowd is almost becoming a riot. If there was one thing that would get him in trouble with his Roman superiors, it was a riot. So, with both the people and the Jewish rulers demanding the death of Jesus, Pilate found it impossible to oppose them both - so he began the process of execution by having Jesus **scourged**.

i. Even before Jesus was to be **scourged**, His physical condition was weak. We can assume that Jesus was in good physical condition up until the night of His arrest. “The rigors of Jesus’ ministry (that is, traveling by foot throughout Palestine) would have precluded any major physical illness or a weak general constitution.” (Dr.

William Edwards [with others] in *JAMA*, 3/21/86)

ii. Add to Jesus’ condition the horror of being **scourged**. The goal of the scourging was to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse and death. “As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim’s back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive the cross.” (Edwards) iii. “The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus’ physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.” (Edwards)

f. **To be crucified**: In pronouncing the sentence, “The mode of death had to be specified under Roman law, and it may be assumed that Pilate used the conventional form, ‘You shall mount the cross’ (*ibis in crucem*) or ‘I consign you to the cross’

(*abi in crucem*).” (Lane)

B. Jesus’ humiliation and death.

1. (Mar_15:16-20) Jesus is beaten and mocked.

Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

a. **Clothed Him with purple . . . twisted a crown of thorns:** A king of that day would often wear a purple robe and a gilded wreath of leaves. The rag of purple and crown of thorns was a mockery of this common practice.

i. "It was probably a scarlet military cloak, 'a cast-off and faded rag, but with color enough left in it to suggest the royal purple.'" (Wessel)

ii. Like Jesus, Christians have always been **mocked**. Graffiti on the walls of Pompeii pictures a Christian kneeling before a donkey hanging on a cross and says underneath, "Anaximenes worships his God."

iii. "Then, again, it is quite clear that *we ought not to care about scorn*. Scorn! Let us scorn scorn. Does the world laugh at us? Let us laugh at the world's laughter, and say to it, 'Dost thou despise us? It is not one half as much as we despise thee. Our fathers despised thy sword, O world, thy dungeons, thy racks, thy gibbets, thy stakes, and dost thou think that we shall tremble at thy scoffs, and jeers?'" (Spurgeon)

b. **And began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"**

It was common to greet the Roman emperor with the cry, "Hail, Caesar!" (*Ave Caesar!*) These mockers twisted this into **Hail, King of the Jews!**

c. **Then they struck Him:** From Mat_27:29, it seems that the soldiers first gave Jesus the **reed** - a stick - to hold as if it were a royal scepter; then they grabbed it from His hand and

hit Him in the head with it, adding great insult to all their injury to Jesus.

i. We should expect that the Roman soldiers were tense during the Passover season, because it was time of messianic expectation among the Jews and riots were likely. Mocking and beating a bruised, bleeding, exhausted man provided a few moments of stress-relieving entertainment.

ii. **Bowing the knee** was a standard act of respect to any king. Instead of giving the normal kiss of warm respect, they **spat on Him**. **Spat on Him** is better translated *kept spitting on Him*.

iii. "See that scarlet robe; it is a contemptuous imitation of the imperial purple that a king wears . . . See, above all, that crown upon his head. It has rubies in it, but the rubies are composed of his own blood, forced from his blessed temples by the cruel thorns. See, they pay him homage; but the homage is their own filthy spittle which runs down his cheeks. They bow the knee before him, but it is only in mockery. They salute him with the cry, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' but it is done in scorn. Was there ever grief like his?" (Spurgeon)

d. **Led Him out to crucify Him**: After a scourging, a man to be crucified was forced to march in a parade, led by a centurion on horseback and a herald who shouted the crime of the condemned. This was Rome's way of "advertising" a crucifixion, and to make the people afraid of offending Rome.

i. This procession is the very thing Jesus was referring to when He asked people to *take up your cross and follow Me* (Mar_8:34).

2. (Mar_15:21-23) Jesus is led to Golgotha (in Latin, *Calvary*).

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a

Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*.

a. **To bear His cross:** As Jesus was led away for crucifixion, He was - like every victim of crucifixion - forced to carry the beams of wood He would hang upon.

i. The weight of the entire cross would typically be 300 pounds. Typically the victim carried only the crossbar, which weighed anywhere from 75 to 125 pounds. When the victim carried the crossbar, he was usually stripped naked and his hands were often tied to the wood.

ii. The upright beams were often permanently fixed in a visible place outside of the city walls, beside a major road.

Many times before this day, Jesus probably passed by the very upright He would hang upon.

b. **They compelled a certain man:** It was the custom of the Romans to make the condemned criminal bear the cross, but in this case Jesus was simply too weak to carry it. They preferred to keep the victim alive until he was crucified, because a public crucifixion was good “advertising” for Rome. When Jesus fell under the weight of the cross, no Roman would help Him carry it. The centurion had the right to compel a local Jew to help carry it, but it would have been an outrage that might lead to uproar or riot. The best solution was to make a stranger carry the cross, so they found a foreigner (**Simon** from Cyrene in North Africa) and made him carry Jesus’ cross.

i. No doubt, Simon was visiting Jerusalem as a Passover pilgrim from his native land (some 800 miles away, on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea). He knew little if anything of who Jesus was, and had no desire to be associated with this Man who was condemned to die as a criminal.

ii. Yet, the Romans were the law, and Simon was not given a choice - **they compelled him to bear His cross**.

Perhaps he was chosen because his skin may have been black, and he was more conspicuous in the crowd. We are

often blessed by the things we are **compelled** to do. Simon did not want to carry this cross, and probably resented it terribly when he was asked. Nevertheless, it probably became the most special and memorable moment of his life.

iii. **Father of Rufus**: Apparently Rufus was known in the early church and was himself a Christian. If this **Rufus** is the same one mentioned in Rom_16:13, we can surmise that Simon came to know what it really meant to take up one's cross and follow Jesus. We may know that his sons became leaders among the early Christians.

iv. "His name was Simon: and where was that other Simon? What a silent, but strong rebuke this would be to him.

Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, where wast thou? Another Simon has taken thy place. Sometimes time Lord's servants are backward where they are expected to be forward, and he finds other servitors for the time. If this has ever happened to us it ought gently to rebuke us as long as we live. Brothers and sisters, keep your places, and let not another Simon occupy your room." (Spurgeon)

c. **They brought Him**: Mar_15:20 says they *led Him out to crucify Him*. By Mar_15:22 the situation has changed: **they brought Him to the place Golgotha**. Jesus could walk when He left His trial before Pilate, but before He reached Golgotha He could hardly walk - they had to *bring* Him.

i. "It would appear that Jesus was so weak through the strain of the last few days, and the scourging, that he was unable to walk, not to speak of carrying His cross. He had to be borne and the sick were borne to Him (Mar_1:32)."

(Bruce)

ii. "These two words are just a little window on the supreme physical exhaustion of the Saviour in this the greatest hour of His agony. You see, when He left the Praetorium they were leading Him; when they came to Golgotha they were bearing Him." (Morrison)

d. **To the place Golgotha**: There was a specific place outside the city walls of Jerusalem, yet still very close, where

people were crucified - and where Jesus died for our sins, where our salvation was accomplished. It was the **Place of a Skull**; it was the place where criminals were crucified.

i. Where was **Golgotha**? We know that it was outside the city walls, and that it was associated with “the skull.” The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built upon the place believed to be Calvary in the fourth century, but some researchers favor the site known as Gordon’s Calvary, which sits atop a hill which looks remarkably like a skull, and is near ancient garden tombs. Most scholars consider the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as more accurate, but most say that Gordon’s Calvary “feels” more like the real spot.

ii. Some people think it was called Golgotha because it was littered with the skulls of men previously executed.

Some think it was called Golgotha because it was on a hill that looked like a skull, with the shadows of a skull’s face in the hillside. Some think it was called Golgotha because the hill was barren, smooth and round like the top of a skull.

e. **He did not take it:** Jesus refused any drug that would numb the pain. He will face the agony of the cross with a clear mind, and not “medicated” in any way.

i. “According to an old tradition, respected women of Jerusalem provided a narcotic drink to those condemned to death in order to decrease their sensitivity to the excruciating pain . . . This human practice was begun in response to the biblical injunction of Pro_31:6-7 : ‘Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.’” (Lane) ii. “The local sour wine was ‘laced’ with myrrh; this would give it a bitter taste, but a soporific effect. Thus is explained the reference to ‘gall’ . . . He would not take any anaesthetic; all His faculties must be unclouded for what lay before Him.” (Cole)

iii. “Was it out of any love to suffering that he thus refused the wine-cup? Ah, no; Christ had no love of suffering.

He had a love of souls, but like us he turned away from suffering, he never loved it . . . Why, then, did he suffer? For two reasons: because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to the completion of the atonement, which saves to the utmost; and because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to perfect his character as ‘a merciful High Priest’ who has to compassionate souls that have gone to the utmost of miseries themselves; that he might know how to succor them that are tempted.” (Spurgeon)

3. (Mar_15:24-26) The crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

a. **They divided His garments:** This was in fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalms 22 : *They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots* (Psa_22:18).

i. “Men were ordinarily crucified naked (Artemidorus II. 61). Jewish sensitivities, however, dictated that men ought not to be publicly executed completely naked, and men condemned to stoning were permitted a loin-cloth (M.

Sanhedrin VI. 3). Whether the Romans were considerate of Jewish feelings in this matter is unknown.” (Lane)

b. **And they crucified Him:** What was it like to be crucified? In days the New Testament was first written, the practice needed no explanation. Centuries later, we do well to appreciate just what happened when someone was **crucified**.

i. “Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.” (Edwards)

ii. The victim’s back was first torn open by the scourging, then the clotting blood was ripped open again when the clothes were torn off the victim. When he was thrown to the

ground to fix his hands to the crossbeam, the wounds were torn open again and contaminated with dirt. Then, as he hung on the cross each breath made the painful wounds on the back scrape against the rough wood of the upright beam.

iii. When the nail was driven through the wrists, it severed the large median nerve going to the hand. This stimulated nerve produced excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and could result in a claw-like grip in the victim's hands.

iv. Beyond the excruciating pain, crucifixion made it painful to simply breathe. The weight of the body pulling down on the arms and shoulders made it feel like you could breathe in but not out. The lack of oxygen led to severe muscle cramps, which made it even harder to breathe. To get a good breath, one had to push against the feet and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the nail-pierced feet produced searing pain, and flexing the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also scraped the open wounds on the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and led to a quicker death.

v. "Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals." (Edwards)

vi. Death from crucifixion could come many different ways:

- Acute shock from blood loss
- Suffocation from being too exhausted to breathe
- Dehydration
- Heart attack, induced by stress
- Heart rupture from congestive heart failure

However, if the victim did not die quickly enough, his legs were broken and he was soon unable to breathe.

vii. How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word *excruciating* from the Roman word “out of the cross.”

“Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!” (Clarke) c. In Jesus’ own day, crucifixion was known to be a horrible practice, yet the Romans used it as their main form of execution for non-Roman citizens. No Roman citizen could be crucified except by direct order of Caesar; it was reserved for the worst criminals and lowest classes.

i. The Roman statesman Cicero said: “It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is an act of wickedness; to execute him is almost murder: What shall I say of crucifying him? An act so abominable it is impossible to find any word adequately to express.”

ii. The Roman historian Tacitus described crucifixion as “a torture fit only for slaves.”

d. **Now it was the third hour:** This is a problem, because Joh_19:14 says that it was at the *sixth hour* (about noon) that Pilate pronounced his verdict. Some think John and Mark counted time differently; some think the difference is due to copyist error; others think it is a *gloss* (a well-intentioned addition by an early copyist).

e. **And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS:** “The wording was designed to convey a subtle insult to Jewish pretensions and to mock all attempts to assert the sovereignty of a subject territory.” (Lane)

i. “It may be that the message of this sign first aroused the hopes of repentant thief. He may have reasoned: ‘If His name is Jesus, then He is a Saviour. If He is from Nazareth, then He would identify with rejected people. If He has a kingdom, then perhaps there is room for me!’” (Wiersbe)

4. (Mar_15:27-32) Jesus is mocked on the cross.

With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with the transgressors.” And

those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! *You* who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

a. **Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him:** Jesus was mocked by those crucified with Him, yet one of those criminals came to a saving faith in Jesus (Luk_23:39-43).

b. **Those who passed by blasphemed Him:** Jesus not only endured mocking and humiliation at the hands of the pagan Roman soldiers, but also from the religious leaders: they **blasphemed Him, wagging their heads . . . they mocked and said among themselves, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."**

i. Greek scholar A.T. Robinson says **mocking** in Mar_15:31 describes "Acting like silly children who love to mock one another."

ii. **Let the Christ . . . descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe:** It is precisely because He would *not* come down that we believe in Him. Jesus did something greater than come down from the cross - He rose from the dead! Yet they did not believe even then.

iii. But many of the priests *did* eventually believe: *A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.* (Act_6:7) c.

He saved others: "That was a fact which even they could not deny. Everywhere, in Jerusalem, in all the towns and villages and hamlets through the countryside, were those whom He had saved." (Morgan)

d. It is bad enough that the Son of God came to earth and man murdered Him in the most tortured way possible; worst of all, sinful men *enjoyed* doing it.

5. (Mar_15:33-37) The last words of Jesus from the cross.

Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.” And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

a. **There was darkness over the whole land:** The remarkable darkness all over the earth showed the agony of creation itself in the Creator’s suffering. “Origen (*Contra Celsus*, ii,33) and Eusebius (*Chron.*) quote the writing of Phlegon (a Roman historian) in which he makes mention of an extraordinary solar eclipse as well as of an earthquake about the time of the crucifixion.” (Geldenhuys)

i. Luke tells us that *the sun was darkened* (Luk_23:45), but Mark makes it clear that it stayed dark for three hours (**there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour**).

ii. Phlegon, Roman historian: “In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake.” (cited in Clarke)

iii. This is especially remarkable because during a full moon - which Passover was always held at - a natural eclipse of the sun is impossible. This was an extraordinary miracle in the heavens.

b. **My God, My God:** By quoting Psalms 22, Jesus declares that He is fulfilling that passage, in both its agony and its victory.

i. The *agony* of Psalms 22 was true for Jesus on the cross:

Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?

.

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.

All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.

Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help

.

Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me

.

I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me

.

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death

.

For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet

.

They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots ii. The victory of

Psalms 22 was true for Jesus on the cross and through the empty tomb: ·

Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog

·

Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me ·

I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You ·

You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

·

For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard

·

My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him ·

The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him will praise the LORD

·

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You

·

For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations

.
All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive

.
A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation .

They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this c. Jesus knew great pain and suffering (both physical and emotional) in His life, but had never known separation from His Father; now He does. There was a significant sense in which Jesus rightly felt **forsaken** by God the Father at this moment.

i. How? Because *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2Co_5:21).

ii. Jesus not only endured the *withdrawal* of the Father's fellowship, but also the actual outpouring of the Father's *wrath* upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity.

iii. Horrible as this was, it fulfilled God's good and loving plan of redemption. Therefore, Isaiah can say *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him* (Isa_53:10).

iv. At the same time, we cannot say that the separation between the Father and the Son at the cross was complete, because as 2Co_5:19 says, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself* at the cross.

v. It rarely grieves man to be separated from God, or to consider that he is a *worthy* object of God's wrath; yet this was the true agony of Jesus on the cross.

vi. From *Throned Upon the Awful Tree* (John Ellerton, 1875)

Throned upon the awful tree,

King of grief, I watch with Thee.

Darkness veils Thine anguished face:

None its lines of woe can trace:
None can tell what pangs unknown
Hold Thee silent and alone
Silent through those three dread hours,
Wrestling with the evil powers,
Left alone with human sin,
Gloom around Thee and within,
Till the appointed time is nigh,
Till the Lamb of God may die.

d. **A sponge full of sour wine:** “The *vinegar* was the sour wine not only of the soldier’s ration, but of everyday use . . . This is apparently quite a different occasion from the official offering of the drugged wine in Mar_15:23.” (Cole) i. “A sour wine vinegar is mentioned in the OT as a refreshing drink (Num_6:13; Rth_2:14), and in Greek and Roman literature as well it is a common beverage appreciated by laborers and soldiers because it relieved thirst more effectively than water and was inexpensive.” (Lane)

e. **Let us see if Elijah will come:** Sadly, Jesus is misunderstood and mocked until the bitter end. Spectators at the cross, with just enough knowledge of the Bible to get it really wrong, speculate wildly thinking that **Elijah** may come and rescue Jesus.

i. As Jesus hung on the cross, His listeners misunderstood Him by taking the part for the whole. He said, “**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?** ” Not only did they get wrong what they heard (Jesus said, “**Eloi**” not “**Elijah**”), but they also only heard *one word* of what He said. This will not do for the true follower of Jesus; we hear not only *one word* from Jesus, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

ii. One of the first things we know about Jesus was that He was misunderstood. When Joseph and Mary left Him behind at Jerusalem, they didn’t understand that He had to be about His Father’s business. Now at the end of His earthly ministry, He is also misunderstood on the cross.

iii. Jesus knew what it was to have His *motives* misunderstood. He healed people, and others said He did it by the devil. He reached out to sinners and people called Him a drunken pig. If you are a follower of Jesus, expect to have your *motives* misunderstood.

iv. Jesus knew what it was to have His *words* misunderstood. He said, “destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again,” no doubt motioning towards His own body as He said it. Still, people insisted that He spoke of the literal temple in Jerusalem. Another time He knew Lazarus was dead and He told others that Lazarus was sleeping. They misunderstood Jesus and thought He meant Lazarus was getting much needed rest. If you are a follower of Jesus, expect to have your *words* misunderstood.

v. Jesus knew what it was to have His *silence* misunderstood. When He first appeared before Pilate, Pilate sent Him off to Herod. When Herod questioned Jesus, He didn’t say a word. Herod misunderstood the silence of Jesus and saw it as weakness and powerlessness. Herod was blind to the power and dignity in the silence of Jesus. If you are a follower of Jesus, expect to have your *silence* misunderstood.

f. **Jesus cried with a loud voice and breathed His last:** Most victims of crucifixion spent their last hours in complete exhaustion or unconsciousness before death. Jesus was not like this; though tremendously tortured and weakened, He was conscious and able to speak right up to the moment of His death.

i. Joh_19:30 tells us what He said when He **cried with a loud voice**: *it is finished*, which is one word in the ancient Greek language, the word *tetelestai*. This ancient word *tetelestai* means, “Paid in Full.” This is the cry of a winner, because Jesus *paid in full* the debt of sin we owed, and had finished the eternal purpose of the cross.

ii. At some point before He died, before the veil was torn in two, before He cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. God the Father set upon Jesus all the

guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God toward us.

iii. As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering, this act of being judged for sin in our place, was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross. This was the *cup* - the cup of God's righteous wrath - that Jesus trembled at drinking (Luk_22:39-46, Psa_75:8, Isa_51:17, Jer_25:15). On the cross Jesus became, as it were, an *enemy* of God who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father's fury, so we would not have to drink that cup.

iv. Isa_53:3-6 puts it powerfully:

He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

v. "Reader! *one drop* of this cup would bear down thy soul to endless ruin; and these agonies would annihilate the universe. He suffered *alone*: for the people there was none with him; because his sufferings were to make an atonement for the sins of the world: and in the work of redemption he had no helper." (Clarke) vi. The death of Jesus on the cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love towards all mankind (Rom_5:8). It is the power of God unto salvation, though it seems foolish to those who reject it (1Co_1:18). At the cross, Jesus wiped out our record of sin and rebellion

against God, nailing it to the cross (Col_2:14). If Jesus had not endured the cross, it might be said that there is a limit to God's love, that there was something God was unwilling to do in order to demonstrate His love for man.

vii. And when was this accomplished? Who knows how long it could have lasted? There was no reason for Jesus to "hang around" on the cross - His work was done, so He did not hang on the cross needlessly. Jesus was in complete control even on the cross, and He used that control to perfectly submit to His Father. "He gave up his life because He willed it, when He willed it, and as He willed it." (Augustine)

6. (Mar_15:38-41) The visible, immediate results of the death of Jesus.

Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

a. **The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom:** The tearing of the temple veil signifies that now man has free access to the throne of grace by the cross, and that no one should ever think again that God dwells in temples made with hands.

i. Significantly, as the wall of separation between God and man is removed, the veil is torn **from top to bottom**.

b. **Truly this man was the Son of God!** The centurion saw Jesus for who He was, is a picture of all who come to Jesus through the cross. At the cross, people see that Jesus **was the Son of God** and this fulfills Jesus' promise *if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself* (Joh_12:32).

i. This centurion saw many people crucified before; yet there was something so remarkable about Jesus that he said something about Jesus that He could say about no one else.

c. **There were also women looking on from afar:** Finally, those most faithful disciples of Jesus are revealed. They are His female followers: **Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome** and **many other women**.

7. (Mar_15:42-47) The burial of Jesus.

Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid.

a. **Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent council member**, though he was apparently silent when the council sentenced Jesus to death (Mar_15:1). He shrunk back then, but is not ashamed to identify with Jesus now.

i. "In the hours of crisis it is often the Peters who have sworn loyalty to Jesus with big gestures and fullness of self-confidence, that disappoint, and it is the secret and quiet followers of the Master (like Joseph, Nicodemus and the women) that do not hesitate to serve Him in love - at whatever the cost." (Geldenhuys)

ii. "Strange as it may appear, the *death* of Jesus is the grand cause of *confidence* and *courage* to a believing soul." (Clarke)

iii. Joseph did not serve Jesus in many ways, but he did serve Him in ways no one else did or could. Peter, James, John, or

even the many women who served Jesus could provide a tomb, but Joseph could and did. Joseph thought, “God provided this tomb for me, but I will give it back to Him.” What special thing has God given you so you can give it to Jesus?

b. Went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus:

Customarily, the bodies of crucified criminals were left on their crosses to rot or be eaten by wild animals - but the Jews wanted no such horror displayed at the Passover season, and Romans were known to grant the corpses to friends or relatives for proper burial.

i. There was nothing unusual about family and friends of the executed man gathering around the place of crucifixion.

ii. “In antiquity the execution of a condemned man did not mark the final moment of his humiliation. Roman law dictated the loss of all honors in death, and even the right of burial was determined by magisterial decree . . . It was not at all uncommon for a body to be left upon a cross either to rot or to be eaten by predatory birds or animals.”

(Lane) It wasn’t unusual to grant the body to a friend or relative for burial, but the point is that they had to *request* this of the Roman magistrate. The fate of even the executed corpse was in his hands.

iii. Of course, Joseph took a risk with this request. He risked Pilate’s animosity or scorn, but it mattered little to Joseph. “Is there no holy chivalry in you? Can it be so, that, because God has dealt so well with you, and trusted you so generously, you will repay him by denying his Son, violating your conscience, and turning your back on truth; and all for the sake of being in the fashion? I know it may seem hard to receive the cold shoulder in society, or to have the finger of scorn pointed at you; but to bow before this selfish dread is scarcely worthy of a man, and utterly disgraceful to a Christian man.” (Spurgeon)

c. Pilate marveled that He was already dead: Typically, crucifixion was a long, agonizing death - yet Jesus died in a

matter of hours. However, the death was confirmed by careful examination of eyewitnesses (Joh_19:31-36).

i. **When he found out from the centurion:** Pilate personally investigated the matter of Jesus' death, and found reliable eyewitness testimony from **the centurion**, who had witnessed perhaps hundreds of crucifixions and knew if a man was dead or not. "A Roman sergeant had seen too many deaths to be in any uncertainty about such a fact." (Cole)

d. **Wrapped Him in the linen:** Because of the coming Sabbath, they were unable to properly prepare the body of Jesus for burial. So, in hurried preparations, Jesus' body is placed in a borrowed tomb.

e. **Laid Him in a tomb:** Tombs such as this were very expensive, and it was quite a sacrifice for Joseph of Arimathea to give his up - but it was only going to be for a few days!

(Mar 15:2) So³ Pilate asked him, "Are you the king⁴ of the Jews?" He replied,⁵ "You say so."⁶

(Mar 15:3) Then⁷ the chief priests began to accuse him repeatedly.

(Mar 15:4) So Pilate asked him again,⁸ "Have you nothing to say? See how many charges they are bringing against you!"

(Mar 15:5) But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

(Mar 15:6) ***Jesus and Barabbas***

During the feast it was customary to release one prisoner to the people,⁹ whomever they requested.

(Mar 15:7) A man named Barabbas was imprisoned with rebels who had committed murder during an insurrection.

(Mar 15:8) Then the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to release a prisoner for them, as was his custom.¹⁰

(Mar 15:9) So Pilate asked them,¹¹ "Do you want me to release the king of the Jews for you?"

(Mar 15:10) (For he knew that the chief priests had handed him over because of envy.)¹²

(Mar 15:11) But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release¹³ Barabbas instead.

(Mar 15:12) So Pilate spoke to them again,¹⁴ "Then what do you want me to do¹⁵ with the one you call king of the Jews?"

(Mar 15:13) They shouted back, "Crucify¹⁶ him!"

(Mar 15:14) Pilate asked them, "Why? What has he done wrong?" But they shouted more insistently, "Crucify him!"

(Mar 15:15) Because he wanted to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them. Then,¹⁷ after he had Jesus flogged,¹⁸ he handed him over¹⁹ to be crucified.

(Mar 15:16) ***Jesus is Mocked***

So²⁰ the soldiers led him into the palace (that is, the governor's residence)²¹ and called together the whole cohort.²²

(Mar 15:17) They put a purple cloak²³ on him and after braiding²⁴ a crown of thorns,²⁵ they put it on him.

(Mar 15:18) They began to salute him: "Hail, king of the Jews!"²⁶

(Mar 15:19) Again and again²⁷ they struck him on the head with a staff²⁸ and spit on him. Then they knelt down and paid homage to him.

(Mar 15:20) When they had finished mocking²⁹ him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes back on him. Then³⁰

they led him away to crucify him.³¹

(Mar 15:21) ***The Crucifixion***

The soldiers³² forced³³ a passerby to carry his cross,³⁴ Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country³⁵ (he was the father of Alexander and Rufus).

(Mar 15:22) They brought Jesus³⁶ to a place called Golgotha³⁷ (which is translated, "Place of the Skull").³⁸

(Mar 15:23) They offered him wine mixed with myrrh,³⁹ but he did not take it.

(Mar 15:24) Then⁴⁰ they crucified⁴¹ him and *divided his clothes, throwing dice* ⁴² for them, to decide what each would take.

(Mar 15:25) It was nine o'clock in the morning⁴³ when they crucified him.

(Mar 15:26) The inscription⁴⁴ of the charge against him read, "The king of the Jews."

(Mar 15:27) And they crucified two outlaws with him, one on his right and one on his left.⁴⁵

(Mar 15:28) (*TEXT OMITTED*)

(Mar 15:29) Those who passed by defamed him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, (Mar 15:30) save yourself and come down from the cross!"⁴⁶

(Mar 15:31) In the same way even the chief priests — together with the experts in the law⁴⁷ — were mocking him among themselves:⁴⁸

"He saved others, but he cannot save himself!

(Mar 15:32) Let the Christ,⁴⁹ the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with him also spoke abusively to him.⁵⁰

(Mar 15:33) ***Jesus' Death***

Now⁵¹ when it was noon,⁵² darkness came over the whole land⁵³ until three in the afternoon.⁵⁴

(Mar 15:34) Around three o'clock⁵⁵ Jesus cried out with a loud voice, " ***Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*** " which means, " ***My God, my***

God, why have you forsaken me? " ⁵⁶

(Mar 15:35) When some of the bystanders heard it they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah!"⁵⁷

(Mar 15:36) Then someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine,⁵⁸ put it on a stick,⁵⁹ and gave it to him to drink,

saying, "Leave him alone! Let's see if Elijah will come to take him down!"

(Mar 15:37) But Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last.

(Mar 15:38) And the temple curtain⁶⁰ was torn in two, from top to bottom.

(Mar 15:39) Now when the centurion,⁶¹ who stood in front of him, saw how he died,⁶² he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

(Mar 15:40) There were also women, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses,⁶³ and Salome.

(Mar 15:41) When he was in Galilee, they had followed him and given him support.⁶⁴ Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem⁶⁵ were there too.

(Mar 15:42) ***Jesus' Burial***

Now⁶⁶ when evening had already come, since it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath),⁶⁷

(Mar 15:43) Joseph of Arimathea, a highly regarded member of the council,⁶⁸ who was himself looking forward to⁶⁹ the kingdom of God,⁷⁰ went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.⁷¹

(Mar 15:44) Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. He⁷² called the centurion and asked him if he had been dead for some time.

(Mar 15:45) When Pilate⁷³ was informed by the centurion,⁷⁴ he gave the body to Joseph.

(Mar 15:46) After Joseph⁷⁵ bought a linen cloth⁷⁶ and took down the body, he wrapped it in the linen and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock.⁷⁷ Then⁷⁸ he rolled a stone across the entrance⁷⁹ of the tomb.

(Mar 15:47) Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body⁸⁰ was placed.

(Mar 16:1) ***The Resurrection***

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought aromatic spices¹ so that they might go and anoint him.

(Guzik)

Mar 16:1-20

Mark 16 - JESUS IS RISEN

A. The testimony to the resurrection.

1. (Mar_16:1-5) The women discover an empty tomb and a special messenger.

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.”

a. **When the Sabbath was past:** The earliest the women could go to the tomb and properly embalm the body of Jesus was on Sunday morning. Sabbath was over at the start of Saturday evening, but it wasn’t light enough until Sunday morning to do the work. The time from sundown on Friday to sunrise on Sunday must have been dark, empty, desperate days for the disciples.

b. **Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome:** These women have proved themselves to be the most devoted followers of Jesus, and were the first to proclaim His resurrection.

i. **Brought spices:** “Spices were not used for mummification, which was not a Jewish custom, but to offset the odors from decomposition.” (Lane)

c. The women were not expecting to find an empty tomb; they came wondering **who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?** This shows that the resurrection accounts cannot be the product of wishful thinking; they were not even expecting that it could happen.

i. Mat_27:65-66 reminds us that there was a guard set round the tomb. All this shows that the stone could not have been rolled away by the women (they were not strong enough) or by the disciples (even if they were brave enough, they could not overcome the armed guards). We also understand that no one else *wanted* to roll away the stone.

Then how did it move? Mat_28:2 tells us that it was an angel who rolled it away.

ii. The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out (Joh_20:19 tells us that Jesus, in His resurrection body, could pass through material barriers). It was rolled away so that others could see in and be persuaded that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead.

d. The women saw an angel in human form (**a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting**), which told them of the resurrected Jesus, and showed them the empty tomb.

e. **Who was crucified. He is risen!** The angel paints the contrast between what Jesus **was** and what He **is**. He **was crucified**, beyond all doubt - that means He was dead. Now, **He is risen** - not only *resuscitated*, but *resurrected*.

i. There are several examples in the Bible of people being *resuscitated* before this, such as the widow's son in the days of Elijah (1Ki_17:17-24) and Lazarus (Joh_11:38-44). Each of these was resuscitated from death, but none of them were *resurrected*. Each of them was raised in the same body they died in, and raised from the dead to eventually die again. Resurrection isn't just living again; it is living again in a new body, based on our old body, perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one *resurrected*.

ii. We should also say that Jesus *still is risen*. He ascended into heaven and continues to reign as resurrected man, still fully man and fully God.

iii. **Jesus of Nazareth . . . who was crucified**: These are not exalted titles for Jesus. **Nazareth** was not a place to be proud of and **crucified** was a title of shame, not honor. Yet Jesus is not ashamed to be called “**of Nazareth**”

and “**crucified**.” “This description of his shame has become his crown of glory, for Paul and all who look to the Crucified and Risen Christ as Saviour and Lord.” (Robertson)

f. **See the place where they laid Him**: The actual *event* of Jesus’ resurrection is nowhere described, but the discovery of it is recorded in some detail. Here, the women who intended to give Jesus’ body a more proper preparation for burial discover that the stone is rolled away from the tomb, and that the body of Jesus is not inside the tomb.

i. Those women were later grateful that the angel told them to **see the place where they laid Him**. It would have - it should have - been enough to merely hear the testimony of the angel. Nevertheless, when they *saw* it, it gave them ground to stand on even more solid than the testimony of an angel. “One eye-witness is better than twenty ear-witnesses; men will believe what you have seen if they do not believe what you have heard.” (Spurgeon) · When we **see the place where they laid Him**, we see that the Father did not forsake Jesus · When we **see the place where they laid Him**, we see that death is conquered · When we **see the place where they laid Him**, we see that we have a living friend in Jesus g. That the resurrection of Jesus *happened* is a matter of history. What it *means* can only be understood by what the Bible tells us. So what does the empty tomb of Jesus and His resurrection mean?

i. The resurrection means that Jesus was *declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead* (Rom_1:4).

ii. The resurrection means that we have assurance of our own resurrection: *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus* (1Th_4:14).

iii. The resurrection means that God has an eternal plan for these bodies of ours. "There was nothing in the teaching of Jesus approaching the Gnostic heresy that declared that the flesh is inherently evil. Plato could only get rid of sin by getting rid of the body. Jesus retains the body; and declares that God feeds the body as well as the soul, that the body is as sacred thing as the soul, since the soul makes it its sanctuary." (Morgan) iv. The resurrection means that Jesus has a continuing ministry: *He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them* (Heb_7:25).

v. The resurrection means that Christianity and its God are unique and completely different and unique among world religions.

vi. The resurrection means that the cross was the payment, and the empty tomb is the receipt, the proof that though it may have looked like He died on the cross like a common criminal, He actually died as a sinless man, out of love and self-sacrifice to bear the guilt of our sin. Jesus death on the cross was the payment, but the resurrection was the receipt, showing that the payment had been perfect in the sight of God the Father.

2. (Mar_16:7-8) The angel gives the women a message to relay.

"But go, tell His disciples; and Peter; that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

a. **Go and tell:** The women were given a message from Jesus and through the angel that they were to deliver. We might think of this message as an *invitation*, because

through this message the disciples were invited to meet with Jesus.

i. This shows that the *invitations of Jesus are filled with grace*. The disciples had completely failed Jesus. He had every right to be done with them, but in grace He extended this kind invitation to them.

ii. This shows us that the *invitations of Jesus are always fulfilled on His part*. He said that He would meet them in Galilee and indeed He did (Joh_21:1 is one example).

iii. This shows us that *Jesus is always first at the appointed meeting*. He said, **He is going before you into Galilee** and indeed He did.

- He goes first because He is the Shepherd
- He goes first because He is the Center
- He goes first because He is the Host
- He goes first because He is more ready for us than we are for Him

iv. This shows us that *when Jesus invites us He wants to reveal Himself to us*. “**He is going before you into Galilee, there you shall see Him**” was the message. The main object was to **see Him**, for Jesus to reveal Himself to His people.

v. This shows us that *when Jesus invites us He always remembers His promises*. “**As He said to you,**” the angel added to the invitation. What Jesus says He will do He always does and He can never fail in any promise.

b. **His disciples; and Peter**: We are amazed that Jesus wanted to meet with these men who failed Him so deeply, yet He makes special notice of **Peter**. Some say He distinguishes **Peter** here because he is *separate* from the rest of the disciples in the sense that he is no longer among them. Instead, Jesus distinguished **Peter** because He had special hope, special forgiveness, special restoration just for the one who denied Him the worst.

i. “If any of you have behaved worse to your Master than others, you are peculiarly called to come to him now. You

have grieved him, and you have been grieving because you have grieved him. You have been brought to repentance after having slidden away from him, and now he seals your pardon by inviting you to himself.” (Spurgeon) c. **For they trembled and were amazed:** “These women left the tomb, and fled. Seized with trembling, and astonishment; - the actual Greek word there is ‘ecstasy,’ - seized with trembling and ecstasy, filled with fear; so they fled.”

(Morgan)

d. **And they said nothing to anyone:** This does not mean that they made no report of the resurrection, because we plainly know that they did (Mar_16:11, Luk_24:9). It means that as they left the scene of the empty tomb, they did not discuss it among themselves. They didn’t try to “figure it out” or “match their stories.” They simply went to make a report to the disciples as the angel invited them to do.

B. Preface to Mar_16:9-20 : Do these verses belong in our Bible?

1. In many Bibles, this last portion of the gospel of Mark is footnoted in some way, indicating that it did not exist in the earliest Greek manuscripts of the gospel of Mark. This has troubled many Christians regarding the reliability of God’s Word - does this passage belong in our Bible?

2. The argument against including Mar_16:9-20 in our Bibles.

a. The two oldest existing Greek manuscripts (dated from 325 and 340 A.D.) do not contain this section; neither do about 100 other ancient manuscripts translated into other languages. A few ancient manuscripts put asterisks next to Mar_16:9-20 to indicate they are additions to the original text.

b. According to their writings, almost all the Greek manuscripts known to Eusebius (who died in 339) and Jerome (who died in 419) did not have these verses.

c. There are two other endings - one shorter, one with some additions - in a few other manuscripts.

d. About one-third of the vocabulary is totally different from the rest of the Gospel of Mark and there is a very awkward grammatical transition between Mar_16:8-9.

e. Most contemporary scholars reject these verses as original.

3. The argument for including Mar_16:9-20 in our Bibles.

a. Many very early Christian writers refer to this passage in their writings, which shows that the early Christians knew it was there and accepted it.

- Papias refers to Mar_16:18. He wrote around A.D. 100

- Justin Martyr's first *Apology* quotes Mar_16:20 (A.D. 151)

- Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* quotes Mar_16:13 and remarks on it (A.D. 180)
- Hippolytus in *Peri Charismaton* quotes Mar_16:18-19. In his homily on the heresy of Noetus he refers to Mar_16:19. He wrote while he was Bishop of Portus (A.D. 190-227)

- Vicentius, Bishop of Thibari, quotes from 2 of the verses in the 7th Council of Carthage held under Cyprian (A.D. 256). Augustine, a century and a half later, in his reply, recited the words again

- The apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* contains Mar_16:15-18 (thought to be in the 200's A.D.)
- The *Apostolic Constitutions* clearly allude to Mar_16:15 in two places and quote Mar_16:16 outright (thought to be in the 200's or 300's A.D.)

b. The overwhelming majority of ancient manuscripts do include this passage.

4. Thoughts on the problem of including or not including.

a. It is highly unlikely that Mark's gospel ended so abruptly at Mar_16:8, with the women simply being afraid, but seeing no concrete evidence of a resurrected Jesus, but only of an empty tomb. However, it is possible that the original ending of Mark's gospel could have been lost rather early.

i. Noted Greek scholar A.T. Robertson wrote, "It is difficult to believe that Mark ended his Gospel with verse 8

unless he was interrupted. A leaf or column may have been torn off at the end of the papyrus roll.”

b. But importantly, the *earliest* testimony we presently have, from writers like Irenaeus and others, argues that the *earliest* Christians accepted it as genuine.

C. Appearances of a risen Lord.

1. (Mar_16:9-11) The appearance to Mary Magdalene.

Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

a. **He appeared first to Mary Magdalene:** Mary’s dramatic meeting with Jesus (whom she first supposed to be the gardener) is described more fully in Joh_20:11-18.

b. **When they heard that He was alive:** Jesus sent her to tell the other disciples that He had risen from the dead. In that day, her testimony would not be considered reliable because she was a woman - but Jesus trusted her, even though the disciples did not (**they did not believe**).

2. (Mar_16:12-13) The appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told *it* to the rest, *but* they did not believe them either.

a. **He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked:** This remarkable encounter with the risen Jesus is described more fully in Luk_24:13-27.

b. **They did not believe them either:** The disciples did not receive the testimony of the women, but they did not receive the testimony of these two men either. They were equal opportunity unbelievers!

3. (Mar_16:14-18) The commission of the eleven, and all the followers of Jesus.

Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

a. Jesus **rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart**: They could have done better. They did not understand, but they could not escape responsibility.

i. “Unbelief is a bloody sin, Heb_10:26; a heavy sin, Joh_3:19; a most ungrateful, inexcusable sin, such as shuts a man up close prisoner in the dark dungeon of the law, unto unavoidable destruction, Gal_3:23.” (Trapp) b. Jesus gave them a command to obey: **Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature**. This is a *command*, not a suggestion. “Interest in missions is not an elective in God’s university of grace. It is something in which every disciple is expected to major.” (Ironsides) i. The idea of a faith that would **go into all the world** wasn’t a part of the Jewish thinking of Jesus’ day. It wasn’t part of the pagan thinking either. It was revolutionary idea in its time.

ii. This command was not obeyed immediately; for many years, the disciples stayed at Jerusalem, and it was only until the church was persecuted that it began to spread out to the world. But it did spread, and continues to.

iii. “An army chaplain once said to the Duke of Wellington, ‘Do you think that it is of any use our taking the gospel to the hill tribes in India? Will they ever receive it?’ The duke replied, ‘What are your marching orders?’ That was the only answer he gave. Stern disciplinarian as that great soldier was, he only wanted marching orders, and he obeyed; and

he meant that every soldier of the cross must obey the marching orders of Christ, his great Commander.” (Spurgeon)

c. Jesus gave them a promise of salvation and a warning: **He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.** Jesus did not say that *condemnation* belonged to the one who was not **baptized**, only to the one **who does not believe**.

i. “A superficial reading of Mar_16:15-16 would suggest that sinners must be baptized to be saved, but this misinterpretation disappears when you note that the emphasis is on *believing*. If a person does not believe, he is condemned, even if he has been baptized.” (Wiersbe)

ii. “The omission of *baptized* with “disbelieveth” would seem to show that Jesus does not make baptism essential to salvation. Condemnation rests on disbelief, not on baptism. So salvation rests on belief. Baptism is merely the picture of the new life not the means of securing it.” (Robertson)

iii. At the same time, it would be *terribly wrong* to regard baptism as “non-essential.” It may not be essential to *salvation*, but it is absolutely essential to *obedience*. Jesus told the believer to be baptized, and they must do it. It becomes essential as soon as Jesus commands it.

iv. In one sermon, Spurgeon “spoke” with someone who said that baptism was non-essential: “What do you mean by ‘nonessential’? ‘I mean that I can be saved without being baptized.’ Will you dare to say that wicked sentence over again? ‘I mean that I can be saved without being baptized.’ You mean creature! So you will do nothing that Christ commands, if you can be saved without doing it? You are hardly worth saving at all! A man who always wants to be paid for what he does, whose one idea of religion is that he will do what is essential to his own salvation, only cares to save his own skin, and Christ may go where he likes. Clearly, you are no servant of his; you need to be saved from such a

disreputable, miserable state of mind; and may the Lord save you!”

d. Jesus gives them a promise of divine power and protection: **And these signs will follow those.**

i. This promise is to be understood in the context of the dangers inherent in the worldwide spread of the gospel, as Paul was bit by a snake and preserved on the island of Malta (Act_28:1-6). Jesus never intended drinking poison or handling snakes to be a specific test or measure of faith.

4. (Mar_16:19-20) The ascending Jesus; the working disciples.

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.

Amen.

a. **He was received up into heaven:** Why did Jesus have to leave? Jesus had to ascend - so that confidence would be put in the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, not in the geographical presence of Jesus.

i. Jesus goes ahead to *prepare a place for you* (Joh_14:3); to *make intercession for us* (Rom_8:34); and to *give gifts to men* (Eph_4:8).

b. **Sat down at the right hand of God:** “He is said to sit *on the right hand of God*, to distinguish him from angels, whose places are but places of ministration.” (Poole)

c. **They went out and preached everywhere:** This means that they didn’t stay just unto themselves, but **they went out**. It is a fair question to ask ourselves: “We come into church, but do we go out the way Jesus wants us to?”

i. “I do want you all to feel that it is not the end, though it may be the beginning, of Christian life to come and hear sermons. Scatter as widely as ever you can the blessing which you get for yourself; the moment you find the light, and realize that the world is in the dark, run away with your

match, and lend somebody else a light.” (Spurgeon) d. **The Lord working with them and confirm the word through the accompanying signs:** When we go out to do the work of God, *Jesus will work with us*. The disciples did what Jesus told them to do, and then Jesus did what only He could do - **the accompanying signs**.

i. This is an excellent pattern for ministry. The preaching came first, then the signs following; signs are to follow believers, instead of us follow after signs.

ii. The final verse continues to this day. The followers of Jesus are still preaching everywhere, the Lord working with them, and He is still confirming His word through accompanying signs. **Amen!**

(Mar 16:2) And very early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, they went to the tomb.

(Mar 16:3) They had been asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

(Mar 16:4) But² when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled back.

(Mar 16:5) Then³ as they went into the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe⁴ sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

(Mar 16:6) But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.⁵ He has been raised!⁶

He is not here. Look, there is the place where they laid him.

(Mar 16:7) But go, tell his disciples, even Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you."

(Mar 16:8) Then⁷ they went out and ran from the tomb, for terror and bewilderment had seized them.⁸ And they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

(Mar 16:9) ***The Longer Ending of Mark***

9 [[Early on the first day of the week, after he arose, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had driven out seven demons.

(Mar 16:10) She went out and told those who were with him, while they were mourning and weeping.

(Mar 16:11) And when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

(Mar 16:12) After this he appeared in a different form to two of them while they were on their way to the country.

(Mar 16:13) They went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

(Mar 16:14) Then he appeared to the eleven themselves, while they were eating, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen him resurrected.

(Mar 16:15) He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

(Mar 16:16) The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned.

(Mar 16:17) These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new languages;¹⁰

(Mar 16:18) they will pick up snakes with their hands, and whatever poison they drink will not harm them;¹¹ they will place their hands on the sick and they will be well."

(Mar 16:19) After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

(Mar 16:20) They went out and proclaimed everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through the accompanying signs.]]